

General Education Performing and Interpreting the Arts Assessment

September 2014 - September 2015

In 2014-2015, the General Education Committee facilitated the assessment of the Performing and Interpreting the Arts (PIA) GE area. The assessment efforts were devoted to reviewing the area syllabi; revising the certification criteria and interpretive statement; and evaluating student learning in relation to the area outcome that reads, "*Students will demonstrate appropriate techniques and critical awareness in an artistic production.*"

Indirect Assessment

In the fall of 2014, the GE Committee reviewed eight syllabi of the PIA area offered that semester. The syllabus review confirmed that the majority of courses appear to fulfill the certification criteria; it was not clear, however, how art studio courses sufficiently meet the certification criteria that read, "In thinking, speaking, and writing students will use

- 1) correct language and terminology for varying artistic types, forms, movements;
- 2) appropriate methods and processes for analyzing, interpreting, and enjoying artistic production, including with respect to the Christian faith."

Direct Assessment

Methods and instruments

The Performing and Interpreting the Arts area was previously assessed in 2010. At that time, a locally-created rubric was utilized for assessing student learning against the PIA SLO in the GE courses offered by all three "creative" departments, namely Art, Music, and Theatre Arts. However, in Fall 2014, during an email exchange and group discussion, the suggestions was made to rename the area; rethink its interpretive statement; revise and loosen its certification criteria; revisit the SLO; and utilize a different assessment tool (rubric) for the spring 2015 assessment. At the same time, the decision was made to focus on interpretive rather than performative aspects of student learning. The [rubric](#) used by the Theatre Arts faculty was at that time selected for this assessment.

In Spring 2015, faculty members from three departments embedded direct assessment in the selected courses, including ART-010: Design 1; MU-120: History of Western Music 1; MU-123: Survey of World Music; and TA-010: Acting. In each course, two different but comparable signature assignments were administered via LiveText, and the faculty collected and compared two sets of student data. 71 samples of student critiques were collected for the Assignment 1, and 69 samples were collected for the Assignment 2. Student artifacts were not randomly selected; however, the students whose artifacts were assessed comprise 29% of all students who earned PIA GE credit in Spring 2015 or 17% of all students who fulfilled the PIA requirement in the fall, spring, and Mayterm semesters in the 2014-2015 academic year.

The assessment of student results was conducted by the course instructors. In May 2015, two assessment sessions were focused on analyzing student performance results and developing recommendations; the participants included the ART-010, MU-120, MU-123, and TA-010 course instructors, the Chair of the Theatre Arts Department who also served as a GE Committee member, and the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness. On August 26, the entire Art and Theatre Arts departments, two faculty from the Music

Department, Registrar and the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness met again for the final discussion of the area Certification Criteria, SLO and assessment tool.

Results and Interpretation

The Spring 2015 assessment findings can be grouped in two major categories.

1. Overall, all instructors who participated in the assessment expressed satisfaction with the progress made by their students with regard to interpretive understanding of works of art, musical oeuvres or theatre performances.
2. Having completed this assessment project, the team reached a consensus that in the future, they would like to evaluate student progress in more holistic terms, which would include both, performative and interpretive aspects as two inseparable components of a creative process.

The following part of the report summarizes and interprets the 2015 assessment results, as well as outlines the future assessment of student learning in this GE area.

1. The aggregated results of the PIA assessment are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Assignment 1 student results scored by the rubric

n=71	Highly Developed (4 pts)	Developed (3 pts)	Emerging (2 pts)	Initial (1 pts)	Below Standards (0 pts)	Mean	Mode	Stdev
Structure and Organization	<u>10</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	2.789	3.000	0.786
Argument and Analysis	<u>13</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	2.676	3.000	0.885
Use of Evidence	<u>14</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>0</u>	2.732	3.000	0.919
Style and Mechanics	<u>19</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	2.901	3.000	0.891

Structure and Organization	10 (14%)	41 (57%)	16 (22%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)
Argument and Analysis	13 (18%)	29 (40%)	22 (30%)	7 (9%)	
Use of Evidence	14 (19%)	33 (46%)	15 (21%)	9 (12%)	
Style and Mechanics	19 (26%)	32 (45%)	14 (19%)	6 (8%)	

Legend: Highly Developed Developed Emerging Initial Below Standards

Table 2: Assignment 2 student results scored by the rubric

n=69	Highly Developed (4 pts)	Developed (3 pts)	Emerging (2 pts)	Initial (1 pts)	Below Standards (0 pts)	Mean	Mode	Stdev
Structure and Organization	<u>22</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	3.029	3.000	0.868
Argument and Analysis	<u>21</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	3.014	3.000	0.843
Use of Evidence	<u>25</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	3.087	3.000	0.880
Style and Mechanics	<u>23</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	3.043	3.000	0.875

Structure and	22 (31%)	32 (46%)	10 (14%)	5 (7%)	
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Organization				
Argument and Analysis	21 (30%)	32 (46%)	12 (17%)	4 (5%)
Use of Evidence	25 (36%)	30 (43%)	9 (13%)	5 (7%)
Style and Mechanics	23 (33%)	31 (44%)	10 (14%)	5 (7%)

Legend: █ Highly Developed █ Developed █ Emerging █ Initial █ Below Standards

The team used different methods of data interpretation. At the outset, faculty compared Assignment 1 and Assignment 2 average scores for all four categories of the rubric. This comparison suggests that students have improved in all four categories of the rubric even though the scope of their improvements varies from category to category (Table 3). Given that the error margin of value-added scores is about twice as large as that of the scores themselves (Suskie, 2009, p. 241), the gain may be perceived as discouragingly small. Therefore, in addition to comparing the average scores in both assignments the participants also compared the results to the newly established standards of performance requiring that in all four categories of the rubric 70% of students will perform at “highly-developed” and “developed” levels (Table 4). This method of analysis demonstrates modest growth in the *Structure and Organization*, *Use of Evidence*, and *Style and Mechanics* categories and a noticeable improvement of student learning in the *Argument and Analysis* category. The latter was identified by the team as one of the two most important categories of the rubric.

Table 3: Summary of student gain results compared to the standards of performance

Category	Assignment 1: score averages	Assignment 2: score averages	Improvement
Structure and Organization	2.789	3.029	0.24
Argument and Analysis	2.676	3.014	0.338
Use of Evidence	2.732	3.087	0.355
Style and Mechanics	2.901	3.043	0.142

Table 4: Summary of student results compared to the standards of performance

Dimension	Assignment 1: Performance at highly-developed and developed levels	Assignment 2: Performance at highly-developed and developed levels	Improvement
Structure and Organization	71%	77%	6%
Argument and	47%	76%	29%

Analysis			
Use of Evidence	65%	66%	1%
Style and Mechanics	71%	77%	6%

1. As mentioned, the team decided to assess both, performative and interpretive aspects of student learning in the future. With this in mind, the group revised the area title, certification criteria, interpretive statement and SLO.

It has been agreed upon by all three departments that some measure of interpretation/reflection, in fact, happens during the process of making/creating/performing and that it is a mistake to view them as exclusive components—for example, there are split-second decisions that happen when a student sings from a score, as to volume, phrasing, and tonality; there are nuances of voice, manner and posture that must be decided on a moment-to-moment basis with acting; there are reactive choices to the previous lines put down that absolutely influence or determine the next lines to be placed in a drawing. This natural complement is why the performing aspect is so crucial to this Westmont’s GE category, as the faculty teaching the courses in this area believe that interpreting alone does not give students a full creative experience. Interpreting naturally occurs as part and parcel of performing/making, but the converse (performing/making always happening when one engages in interpreting) is not so.

The goal of the first criterion, *Make/perform works of art*, was to be as clear, direct, and open-ended enough to allow all disciplines the flexibility needed to best work within their particular art form. For music classes in this category, being foundational in nature, it may not be fair or realistic to insist that they perform *original* works, as it may well accomplish their goals to perform classics, or works specifically written to be foundational training.

With regards to the second criterion, *Effectively demonstrate creative and interpretive processes*, the faculty teaching this GE area courses want students not simply to make/perform works of art aimlessly or wildly, but to do so with intent, intelligence, and some measure of creative thought and/or interpretation. For courses which focus more heavily on analysis of the art form, the faculty likewise wish them to conduct their analyses with the same intent, intelligence, and some measure of creative thought and/or interpretation.

It was decided that each creative discipline would articulate the expectation for “highly developed”, “developed,” “emerging,” and “initial” levels for both *Make/perform works of art* and *Effectively demonstrate creative and interpretive processes* dimensions and submit this information to Office of Educational Effectiveness in Spring 2016. It was also agreed that each department will be responsible for capturing and providing evidence of student learning measured against the rubric.

Closing the Loop Activities

The faculty participated in the Performing and Interpreting the Art assessment developed the following area modifications, which were approved by the GE Committee on September 9 and by the Academic Senate on September 21, 2015.

Area Modifications:

Working Artistically (i.e., Music, Art, Theatre Arts) Courses satisfying this requirement develop students' understanding of the fine arts and performing arts, including music, visual arts, or theatre. Such courses develop and expand perceptual faculties, develop foundational physical practices integral to the art form, and explore the critical principles which guide artists in the area.

Interpretive Statement:

Interpretive understanding of an art form is necessary for in-depth engagement in an artistic discipline. However, interpretation alone is not sufficient to qualify a course in the Working Artistically area. Courses fulfilling this category are foundational to their discipline, require the production of at least a modest amount of art as a means of understanding the process by which artists create, and include formal reflection on the general principles underlying artistic production. Creative production may entail wholly original work or creation/performance of previously created works, as appropriate per the specific artistic discipline.

Certification Criteria:

Understanding that making and interpreting in the arts are organically interrelated, courses in this area will require that students:

- Make/perform works of art
- Effectively demonstrate creative and interpretive processes.

SLO:

Students will demonstrate artistic processes and interpretive understanding in an artistic production.

Assessment-Guided Closing the Loop Activities:

After this round and assessment and discussions, the following changes were introduced by the faculty in their PIA/WA courses:

ART-010. Based on the assessment results, the instructor decided to put a greater emphasis on teaching specific design related terminology. A glossary of terms was included in the course syllabus and several quizzes will be administered throughout the semester to test for student comprehension of lecture material and in-class discussions as it relates to design vocabulary.

MU-20. The instructor has increased emphasis on course accessibility to non-musicians.

MU-120. In order to better prepare students for assessing their Chapel music performances and writing reflective essays, the instructor has refined the prompt for student reflective essays and will lead class discussions around the following questions:

- How does performing in public affect the nature of performance?

- When performing any public activity (a sporting event, a presentation for a group, leading a discussion), how do you seek to ensure you will perform well?
- How do you assess your performance? If you are performing an activity as part of a group, how do you assess the group's performance?

TA-010. The instructor decided to focus his future assessment efforts more in the performance area than in the written responses. In his own words, he “learned that even though the written play reviews are an important element of the course goals, they do not fully encompass the student learning outcomes of the GE category. Though this change presents some challenges for data collection and review (video archives), I believe it will be more resonant both with the aims of the GE category and the overall focus of the course.”

Reference

Suskie, L. A. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[Performing and Interpreting the Arts Rubric \(2015\)](#)