Using the VALUE Rubrics for Improvement of Learning and Authentic Assessment  
CASE STUDY: Texas A&M University

AAC&U VALUE Rubrics at Texas A&M University  
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Which rubrics are you currently working with?

Written communication and intercultural knowledge and competence

To what degree have the rubrics currently being used on your campus been adapted or modified from the original online templates?

The rubric utilized by the Writing Assessment Project (WAP) was modified by combining a preexisting tool with the VALUE rubric for written communication. Our original WAP rubric was designed with a three-point scale; it was modified to include a fourth point in order to match the VALUE rubric. The naming conventions for the columns were modified thusly: (1) Developing, (2) Sufficient, (3) Proficient, and (4) Exemplary. While the WAP rubric looks different from the VALUE rubric, the overall disciplinary content and scales are consistent. For our Intercultural Competence Project (ICP), the VALUE rubric for intercultural knowledge and competence was not modified; it was used to score student work as published by AAC&U.

How are you using the rubrics?

As part of the assessment of undergraduate (general education) learning outcomes, two projects at Texas A&M University utilize VALUE rubrics. First, the Writing Assessment Project (WAP) is designed to assess the undergraduate learning outcome related to effective communication. WAP utilizes a modified version of the VALUE rubric for written communication. Next, the Intercultural Competence Project (ICP) is designed to assess the undergraduate learning outcome related to social, cultural, and global competence. The ICP utilizes the VALUE rubric for intercultural knowledge and competence.
WAP is designed to assess the undergraduate learning outcome related to effective communication skills. Approximately five hundred papers are gathered every academic year from upper-level students writing in their majors in participating colleges/departments. This sample of papers includes complete class (course sections) sets. A group of approximately thirty faculty members are invited to participate in a full day of scoring the papers, during which they are provided with meals and honoraria. The faculty scorers are calibrated on a modified version of the VALUE rubric for written communication by experts from the University Writing Center. Each paper is scored by two faculty members; a third scorer is involved if the first two do not reach approximate agreement. WAP meets desired levels of inter-rater agreement in faculty scoring. The result of the project is meaningful information regarding the writing skills of students from the participating colleges/departments. Each participating department receives an individualized report comparing their students’ achievement to their college and to the university overall.

As a pilot project in 2011, the ICP gathered samples of upper-level student work (papers, projects, essays, etc.) assigned by faculty members to demonstrate students’ competencies related to intercultural and/or diversity issues. Papers were scored by groups of Texas A&M University faculty utilizing the VALUE rubric for intercultural knowledge and competence. The faculty scorers calibrated their use of the rubric. Each paper was scored by two faculty members; a third scorer was involved when the first two did not reach approximate agreement. Appropriate inter-rater agreement levels were attained.

Who is primarily working with the VALUE rubrics on your campus?

All general education assessment measures are vetted and endorsed by a group of college assessment liaisons. Assessment liaisons are usually faculty members charged with overseeing the assessment efforts for their colleges. They serve as the advisory group to the Office of Institutional Assessment. General education measures are also endorsed by the Core Curriculum Council of the faculty senate.
The scoring of student work is conducted by a cross-disciplinary group of faculty members who are trained and calibrated by a campus expert on the use of the rubric(s) in daylong scoring sessions.

What have the data you’ve collected from the VALUE rubrics told you about student learning on your campus? What have you done with the results from assessment? Have you shared or discussed findings? If so, with whom? What actions to improve teaching and learning have occurred as a result? If you have not collected data yet or do not yet have results, how soon will your campus have findings based on analyses of student work samples using the rubrics?

Assessment results are disaggregated by major, and department-level reports are provided to participating entities. The department-level reports compare student achievement levels within the affiliated college and to the university overall. Departments use the results to make program-specific curricular and/or procedural improvements. General education assessment results are also provided to the provost’s office and are utilized in accountability and strategic planning efforts.

What else should we know about the use of rubrics on your campus?

The VALUE rubric for intercultural knowledge and competence, utilized in the administration of the ICP, was well received by the faculty and staff scorers. Participants suggested that the rubric calibrator provide a guide, with bulleted pieces of information, for scorers to consider when scoring categories of the rubric. For example, for the second category of the rubric related to knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks, the guide could ask, “How many worldviews are represented in this paper?” Lastly, participants found it difficult to score the category of the rubric related to verbal/nonverbal communication skills (valid N=2). It was determined that, for the most part, these skills must be observed or directly addressed in the paper. Therefore, in the future, this portion of the rubric will be removed.
What else should we know about your current or future plans for the direct assessment of student work and learning outcomes on your campus?

In conjunction with its Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges accreditation, and in an effort to broaden access to high-impact practices (HIPs) for learning improvement, Texas A&M University established its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), “Aggies Commit to Learning for a Lifetime.” The QEP will strive to elicit student commitments to intentional learning through engagement in HIPs. Student reflections from across the university will be collected, and the VALUE rubrics for lifelong learning and integrative learning will be applied to the work by groups of faculty in order to determine the extent to which the established outcomes have been attained.