



LEARNING MATTERS

Building Curricular Cohesion at LaGuardia Community College

Resources for Faculty, Staff & Students

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Introduction

This Guide offers resources for LaGuardia faculty, staff, and students engaged in our common work with the Learning Matters Core Competencies and Communication Abilities.

In this Introduction, we'll explain "Learning Matters," an umbrella name for LaGuardia's multi-faceted work around curricular cohesion and outcomes assessment in both General Education and disciplinary majors or programs. In this Guide, we:

- ✓ Dive deeper into our signature modes of assessment here at LaGuardia.
- ✓ Describe assessment resources available for faculty.
- ✓ Suggest ways to design assignments alongside the Competencies and Abilities.
- ✓ Offer classroom resources to contextualize the Competencies and Abilities for students.
- ✓ Answer Frequently Asked Questions.

The major goals of this guide are to:

- ✓ Improve communication with faculty and students about the Competencies and Abilities.
- ✓ Offer resources for assignment design, related to the Competencies and Abilities.
- ✓ Explore how the Competencies and Abilities inform our broader philosophy of Outcomes Assessment.

Learning Matters: Making Liberal Arts Part of a Coherent Curriculum

LaGuardia Community College serves a vibrant student body, enrolling 20,000 degree students and 30,000 continuing education students annually. Students come from more than 150 countries and speak 100 different languages. Two thirds are women; large majorities are low-income and the first in their families to attend college.

Seeking to serve these dynamic students, LaGuardia has become a national leader in educational innovation. Our graduation rates are far above the national community college average, but unacceptably low. Students spend too much time in remedial courses and courses that don't count towards their majors. Many get lost on the way to graduation and drop out, representing a major setback for the student, the College, and our society.

To address this challenge, LaGuardia has drawn on the best new research (such as Bailey's *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success*) to launch a multi-pronged effort to structure guided pathways from enrollment to graduation.¹ With funding from the USDOE, LaGuardia has re-invented its First Year Seminar and accelerated remedial education; research shows that both efforts are making a dramatic difference. LaGuardia is also deploying digital technology and improved advisement to guide student progress.

One way LaGuardia promotes student learning and graduation is through our "Learning Matters" initiative, centered on our Core Competencies and Communication Abilities. Identified and designed by faculty and approved by college governance, these Competencies and Abilities focus college-wide attention on shared objectives that address central dimensions of learning often associated with liberal arts education, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, global

¹ Thomas Bailey, Shanna Smith Jagers and Davis Jenkins, *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015)

learning, self-reflection, and effective communication. Adapted to disciplinary settings, a college-wide focus on these objectives helps our students develop the higher order thinking and adaptive learning capacities needed for success in advanced education and 21st century careers. See the [Core Competency and Communication Ability Rubrics](#).

To support this focus on shared objectives and help faculty examine the effectiveness of courses and programs, the Learning Matters Competencies and Abilities structure LaGuardia's outcomes assessment system. Outcomes assessment is a set of processes that accredited institutions of higher education are required to undertake to: 1) identify college-wide learning priorities or competencies, for both General Education and disciplinary majors; 2) collect data that documents student learning, and 3) use that data to make changes in curriculum and pedagogy that measurably improve student learning.

The activities and initiatives of Learning Matters inform a multitude of on-going projects meant to advance our common work:

- ✓ Programmatic development of curriculum maps to identify key places to build student learning and progress around the Competencies and Abilities.
- ✓ Seminars in the Center for Teaching and Learning that help faculty build familiarity with the Competencies and Abilities and design ways to address them.
- ✓ Mini-grants for programmatic development, including changes in curriculum and pedagogy intended to improve student learning.
- ✓ Focused Inquiry Projects in the Provost Learning Space.
- ✓ Departmental engagement in the Periodic Program Review process.
- ✓ Faculty and staff engagement in benchmark readings and scoring student artifacts for outcomes assessment.

In short, Learning Matters helps faculty across liberal arts and professional majors work together to integrate the Competencies and Abilities into key courses in their majors. It also speaks to the goals of transforming coherent curriculum frameworks into rich classroom learning and teaching, including through assignment design and authentic assessment. It helps key programs to engage in a sustained process of curricular transformation. It helps faculty create enduring curricular resources that align the everyday practices of teaching and learning with a cohesive curriculum framework. Ultimately, Learning Matters strengthens LaGuardia's effort to address its primary goal: effectively advancing students to graduation, transfer and career.

Signature Assessment at LaGuardia: The Philosophy of a Learning College

LaGuardia's outcomes assessment processes have emerged organically from sustained work by faculty and staff over the past two decades. Our assessment framework starts by thinking about:

- ✓ The *entire* purpose of college education, from first to last semester.
- ✓ The teaching that takes place inside *and* outside the classroom.
- ✓ The learning that happens *within* and *across* programs, majors, or disciplines.

At the core of LaGuardia Community College's Mission Statement "to educate and graduate" one of the world's most diverse student populations is an idea that also rests in the heart of the larger mission of the City University of New York (CUNY): opportunity. The central mission of both LaGuardia and CUNY aims to provide students with the tools, abilities, and higher-order competencies they need to create new opportunities for themselves, and, in the process, to change their world. At LaGuardia, three additional Core Values anchor this mission: diversity, responsibility, and learning. These values are the foundation that supports an assessment framework that goes far beyond rote reporting of grades or a compliant normative testing schema. Our mission and core values propel how students learn at the College.

Our assessment processes are meant to answer questions such as:

- ✓ What do we want our students to learn?
- ✓ What are our common priorities as a College?
- ✓ How do we know we are succeeding in teaching those priorities?
- ✓ How do we know our students are learning, and how do we prove it?

While outcomes assessment is required to maintain accreditation and exist as a college, LaGuardia has higher goals as well. LaGuardia deploys outcomes assessment in its effort to become what could be called "a learning college" – a college that is continuously examining, learning about, and seeking to improve the ways it supports student learning and development.

This reflects the core value of "learning" – an understanding that learning is not confined to students alone, but also a goal for faculty and staff. And it also embodies the value of "responsibility" – faculty and staff taking responsibility for collectively strengthening the education that we provide to our students.

LaGuardia has drawn accolades from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment and the Association of American Colleges & Universities for its ability to use outcomes assessment to help faculty make changes that improve student learning.² Since 2002, LaGuardia has steadily built broad faculty engagement with an outcomes assessment process centered on a common set of outcomes addressed in both General Education courses and key courses in the majors. Assessing authentic learning artifacts gathered in students' ePortfolios, faculty engage in an inquiry process that has been shown to support effective changes in

² Stacey Provezis, "LaGuardia Community College: Weaving Assessment into the Institutional Fabric" In *Using Assessment Results: Promising Practices of Institutions That Do It Well*, ed. G.R. Baker (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2012). <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/LaGuardiaCC.pdf>

curriculum and pedagogy.³ In 2012, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education commended LaGuardia for our exemplary work in building broad faculty engagement in outcomes assessment.

The Learning Matters Core Competencies: In 2013-15, LaGuardia built on its successful assessment work by engaging more than 200 faculty, staff, and students in developing an updated set of Core Competencies, designed to fit with CUNY Pathways and advance higher order thinking. Through broad study and debate, LaGuardia faculty identified three overarching Core Competencies:

- ✓ ***Inquiry and Problem Solving*** asks students to seek and use disciplinary and cross-disciplinary content knowledge to address challenging issues; they weigh evidence and draw conclusions through a process of synthesis and evaluation.
- ✓ ***Global Learning*** asks students to approach the world's challenges and opportunities from multiple perspectives and engage with issues of diversity, identity, democracy, power, privilege, sustainability and ethical action. Encompassing multiple dimensions, such as intercultural communication and ethical decision-making, Global Learning helps students prepare for life and work in a complex global future.
- ✓ ***Integrative learning*** asks students to make connections between ideas and apply them to new contexts, within and beyond campus and over time. It supports the transfer of academic and non-academic knowledge across semesters and disciplines, as well as the higher-order processes of synthesis and application often described as "learning for understanding."

Students demonstrate Core Competencies using one of three Communication Abilities: Written, Oral or Digital. Writing with power and clarity – the ability to combine vocabulary with grammatical proficiency, fluency, and cogent organization – has long been a hallmark of liberal education. LaGuardia faculty decided that oral communication – encompassing language, delivery and logical organization – was equally crucial for student learning. And LaGuardia faculty also recognized the importance of helping students develop the ability to harness the affordances of digital media to communicate their knowledge and ideas in a fast changing world.

Our three higher-order Core Competencies are composites of skills, attitudes, and knowledge: they each promote dimensions of learning that require exposure, time, process, and reflection. They are not the kinds of skills that one can purchase for credentialing or certification or accumulate quickly, but instead they offer methods for interacting with complex problems, new cultures, and changing selves. Our communication abilities give students the tools, voices, and genres for teaching others everything they're learning and all that they already know.

Approved unanimously by College Senate in January 2015, the Learning Matters Competencies and Abilities provide a framework for faculty and staff collaboration across departments and divisions. Designing assignments, activities and pedagogy to recursively address this framework can build the capacities students need to achieve success at LaGuardia and transfer schools. At the same time, our work can empower our students as engaged citizens, confronting a

³ Paul Arcario, Bret Eynon, et al., "Closing the Loop: How We Better Serve Our Students through a Comprehensive Assessment Process," *Metropolitan Universities Journal* 24 (2013).
<http://lagcc.mcncr.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2013/12/Arcario-et-al-Closing-the-Loop-MUJ-24-2.pdf>

challenging world. And, interestingly, research shows that these same capacities – problem-solving, communication, collaboration across differences and integration, or the ability to apply academic knowledge in new, real-world situations – are the qualities that employers increasingly seek.⁴ Across disciplines, faculty and staff can use this framework to help students prepare for more successful futures in their education, their communities and their careers.

Rubrics and Readings: Following the Senate approval of the Learning Matters framework, nearly 200 faculty drew on the AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics to develop and test rubrics for this Competency framework. The resulting LaGuardia [Core Competency and Communication Ability Rubrics](#) provide the structured definitions faculty need to address the Competencies in disciplinary courses and majors, from Nursing to Biology to Education and Engineering. Like the democratic process of selecting Competencies, this participatory rubric development process built support for the framework across the faculty community.

Our work in assessment means continually examining our mission and values as a College by collecting authentic student work from our classrooms in the beginning, middle, and end of our students’ college careers. In a process we call Benchmark Readings, we read student work alongside the Core Competency and Communication Ability rubrics we designed, and “score” that work through a norming process to ensure our judgments are aligned. We then reflect on our findings and think carefully about our classroom assignments and student programs to make sure we’re getting the results we want. Finally, with support from the Center for Teaching & Learning, we design and implement changes in curriculum and pedagogy intended to improve student learning – a process we call “Closing the Loop.”

To support this entire process, we turn to ePortfolio technology in two ways. First, students submit their authentic work into our ePortfolio platform by uploading files for collection, which we submit for scoring by faculty and staff readers trained in our norming process. Second and more importantly, our nationally recognized ePortfolio initiative offers a virtual space for students to share their work, demonstrate learning, and reflect on their growth at LaGuardia.

With many new initiatives at the College over the past few years, including our new credit-based First Year Seminar and our shared advisement model, our Core Competencies and Abilities have played a vital role in informing growth and change in and across our academic and co-curricular programs. As we’ve been “closing the loop” at an institutional scale, we’ve had to shift what we measure and how we measure it. We now see ourselves “evolving the loop” into exciting new directions as a 21st century learning college: a College that not only demonstrates evidence of student learning over time, but a College that continually adapts to those students, and learns from empowering them and providing them with ever richer and more meaningful opportunities.

⁴ See, for example, the Career Readiness Competencies developed, based on extensive research, by the National Center for Colleges and Employers, accessed at <http://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>; or *IT TAKES MORE THAN A MAJOR: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*, research conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Association of American Association of Colleges and (Washington DC: 2013).

Faculty Resources for Assignment Development

We focus on assignments because assignment design and development is the heart of powerful pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Faculty expertise and intentional action around assignments are crucial to student learning. And the student artifacts that emerge from faculty-generated assignments provide more meaningful information for improvement than other, more distant, forms of assessment. But to yield these benefits, assignments must be carefully thought through and designed.

In this chapter, we offer a brief background on assignment design and direct you to available resources and materials. These resources are meant to provide you with support for our discussion in the subsequent chapter on step-by-step assignment design.

This chapter cannot replace the intellectual pleasure – the fun – and intensity of discussing your assignment in a department workshop, a college-wide charrette, a Center for Teaching and Learning seminar, or a Learning Matters Mini-Grant. We see this Guide as a supplement to – and not replacement for – the range of face-to-face activities led by our colleagues.

As You Begin

The most important action you can take before beginning to create or revise an existing assignment is refreshing your familiarity with the rubric relative to the Core Competency and/or Communication Ability you're pairing with it. In particular, we suggest you consider any lingering questions about a word, phrase, or concept by contacting someone from the Assessment Leadership Team, or a colleague from your program with knowledge of the rubric. We also hope that the other chapters in this guide, as well as the materials and resources described below, might help increase your level of comfort with the rubric you've chosen.

Visualizing the Process

The Learning Matters process will help faculty develop creative but connected assignments in a wide range of courses. To think about this, let's consider how an Accounting student, Estefany, encounters the Competencies as she progresses through her coursework.

In her first semester, Estefany takes BTF101, the First Year Seminar for Business, where the program begins to build Global Learning. Estefany's professor may ask her to examine a piece of her clothing manufactured abroad and explore resources on global sweatshops; she writes a short essay that links questions of fashion with economics and business ethics. In BT1121, People, Work and Organizations, her professor builds Inquiry and Problem Solving by having Estefany research the career prospects and work cultures in different accounting and business fields. Using her ePortfolio, Estefany develops a research-based digital presentation and reflects on the implications for her educational and career goals.

While taking Business and Accounting courses, Estefany takes courses in the Pathways/ General Education core, which also address the Competencies. For example, to build Integrative Learning and Written Communication, her ENG101 instructor might have her read Solomon Northrup's 12 Years a Slave and consider its dual nature as a piece of literature and an artifact of history. "What does Northrup's experience illustrate about the role of choice and historical circumstance in life? What choices does he make?" And, helping Estefany

make connections to her own experience, “What lessons can you take away from Northrup’s life? How do you confront circumstance and make choices in your own life?”

Other Gen Ed courses help Estefany grow. In MAT120, Introduction to Statistics, she builds Inquiry and Problem Solving by analyzing statistics related to economic change in the NYC area. She takes HUC101, Introduction to Human Communication, which addresses Integrative Learning and Oral Communication, where the instructor asks her to select and analyze a TED talk related to her major, and make a presentation identifying the effective speech techniques she observed and what she learned about her field. And in SSN187, Urban Sociology, which address Global Learning, her instructor has her conduct community-based research and write a paper about immigrants and housing quality in Corona, Queens.

In her final semesters at LaGuardia, Estefany takes Accounting courses that help her not only deepen her skills as an accountant, but also draw together and apply what she has learned across her coursework. In BTA202, the Accounting Capstone, designated to address Integrative Learning, her instructor might ask her to use statistics and knowledge about business decision-making to complete a case study of a hypothetical company:

Presented with a situation where they serve as an advisor for a company whose products (5% - based on sampling) could pose serious risks to its customers, students are asked to consider factors such as sales, revenue, the fact that the company operates in a global marketplace, etc., and to (a) identify and reflect on the ethical dilemma, (b) consider alternatives, and (c) make a decision on how they would advise the company to deal with the ethical dilemma.

In the assignment, Estefany identifies ways she applied skills and knowledge gained from previous courses. Her final reflection, placed in ePortfolio, helps her to think about her learning and growth, what tools will help her be a life-long learner, and her next steps as an accounting professional.

The description above only samples the courses Estefany takes on her journey towards graduation. But it suggests ways that the Core Competency framework helps faculty focus on shared goals and build more cohesive educational experiences. For example:

* Students in Philosophy fulfill a requirement by taking *HUP114, Medical Ethics*. Building *Inquiry and Problem-Solving*, they will pick a topic from a list (including such topics as use of animals for medical research, medical treatment in prisons, and physician-assisted suicide) and create a well-cited scholarly research paper on the ethical issues involved.

* Occupational Therapy Assistant majors taking *SCO101, Introduction to Occupational Therapy*, will begin to consider *Global Learning*. Asking students to consider their role as health providers in a global community, they explore issues of cultural diversity, cultural competence, and cultural identity in health care, as well as ethical challenges related to global disparities in health care access.

* In their capstone course, *HUT299, Experiential Learning in Theatre*, Theatre majors will deepen *Integrative Learning* as they put on Chekov’s “The Cherry Orchard.” An assignment asks them to create a digital collage that shows ways that personal experience and “classes in Theater and other classes (such as English, History,

Psychology, or Human Sexuality) help you think about and prepare to play your character.”

Rubrics

The only resource you absolutely *need* for assignment development or revision is a relevant [rubric](#). But we hope to make your process easier by pointing out some other materials and resources that might give you a fuller sense about how to approach assignment design. When it comes to **rubrics**, we should keep a few things in mind. The most important elements to consider are the *dimensions* listed in the left column of the grid on the second page of the matrix. This column contains the basic dimensions, or elements, that define the relevant Core Competency or Communication Ability in practical terms. As you familiarize yourself with these dimensions, be sure to observe the range of possible student work along the 1-4 scale connected to each.

Comprehensive Curriculum Maps

As you consider how you might scaffold, or stage, the various rubric dimensions into your assignment, you might bear in mind how your overall course fits into your program’s **curriculum map**. If you’ve never seen yours, or haven’t seen it lately, you can email your program director or chair. The maps are useful because they show how students progress through your program in relation to the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities, from First Year Seminar to Capstone.

Building on Pathways and the Competency framework, faculty program directors in all majors have drafted and finalized programmatic curriculum maps. Each map identifies key courses in the major and the Pathways required core where faculty help students build learning associated with specific Competencies and Abilities. Program faculty reviewed their course sequences and identified at least three places – early, middle and late – to address each Core Competency and Ability. Coordinators for General Education courses required by CUNY Pathways (such as ENG101, the equivalent of Freshman Composition) similarly selected a place for their courses in the framework. College-wide conversation supported these articulations and a shared understanding of how students develop as learners in each program or major.

Based on the Core Competencies, these curriculum maps have become a key resource in helping LaGuardia faculty build a cohesive focus on deep learning and liberal arts education, in and across disciplines. Learning Matters leverages this framework to help faculty across disciplines work together to make coherent curriculum a reality college-wide.

One reason we suggest reviewing a Curriculum Map, and orienting your course within a student’s trajectory toward graduation, is that it may affect how one engages with the dimensions on the rubric. For instance, in a First Year Seminar or introductory-level course, faculty might build the capacity for student learning by addressing one or two dimensions at a time; that is, perhaps they might choose not to address all four dimensions in one high-stakes assignment. Along those lines, they might instead choose to address one or two dimensions of a Core Competency or Communication Ability in a low-stakes assignment, and then scaffold that work into a high-stakes assignment that, collectively, addresses all dimensions of the rubric.

This tactic might raise questions about what student work, or how much work, to deposit in our Digation system for potential scoring in a Benchmark Reading. Putting that question aside for

a moment, we can extrapolate from this tactic to suggest that faculty teaching Capstone courses might approach the dimensions on a rubric differently from those teaching introductory courses. For Capstone courses, or other electives appearing later in a student's college career, it may be more appropriate to capture all dimensions in high-stakes assignments.

It is possible that faculty who design assignments for the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities might not find their course on the curriculum map. Perhaps they choose to design an assignment in a class not designated for Outcomes Assessment or deposit. Maybe they are simply curious, or have disciplinary or professional interest in aligning a course objective with, say, Global Learning. We more than welcome all faculty to think along with the rubrics, or even a dimension or two, no matter what courses they're teaching. There's much to be gained in our collective efforts to align our pedagogies with college-wide learning goals.

The best way to narrow the search for a model assignment to *your* course or *your* program is to contact your program director, department chair, or someone from the Assessment Leadership Team. Additionally, you or your colleagues may also have participated in a recent Learning Matters Mini-Grant, or attended an Assignment Design Charrette, or participated in a seminar with the Center for Teaching and Learning. These are all spaces where faculty have developed, revised, and even tested assignments related to our Competencies and Abilities. We're sure any of these points of contact can link you to someone who can help you think through assignment design to support LaGuardia's student learning goals.

Assignment Showcases and Library

As members of the Assessment Leadership Team, we've noticed an increasing numbers of faculty asking for examples of assignments directed toward our Competencies and Abilities. The Assessment Leadership Team will continue to support **Assignment Showcases**, and we recently broke ground on a new **Learning Matters Assignment Library**, comprised of model LaGuardia course assignments to help guide programs and individual faculty as they develop materials for their courses.

The Center for Teaching and Learning supported the creation of the Learning Matters Assignment Library (LMAL), creating opportunities for faculty to advance scholarly teaching and publish well-crafted assignments that build student competencies and advance student progress along the guided pathway. Faculty work published in the LMAL will be recognized as a college contribution in the promotion and tenure process, helping to ensure that it becomes a robust resource for broadening the impact of the Learning Matters process.

Please feel free to contact any member of the Assessment Leadership Team for details or questions, and check our website for updates on accessing the Library to help inform your work. And please consider submitting something in the future!

Norming Packets

After looking at the rubrics, curriculum maps, and sample faculty assignments, you may still be wondering: what about student work? Fortunately, we do have examples of scored student work for every Core Competency and Communication Ability in our **Norming Packets**. Norming Packets contain annotated rubrics and examples of student work along the 1-4 range – from novice to proficient. Each of these samples might interest you for different reasons. Faculty

teaching intro-level courses might want to understand the limitations of work that achieves a novice or developing score in Competencies and Abilities (1's and 2's), while those teaching Capstone courses might look closer at work that achieves proficiency and mastery (3's and 4's). While you peruse a Norming Packet, be sure to make a mental note of participating in a Benchmark Reading. During those readings, teams across the College participate in norming sessions to discuss the rubrics against previous student work in more detail with their colleagues. Then they score new artifacts deposited by students and discuss their impressions afterwards over a cup of our famous LaGuardia coffee. If you haven't done so recently, or at all, please consider participating!

Charrettes

The Assignment Design Charrette is a central element in our design approach; it is a proven faculty engagement process developed by Pat Hutchings of the Carnegie Foundation and the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. Built on structured peer review, and having faculty plan and develop draft assignments that are linked to a designated Core Competency, the charrette puts responsibility for curriculum cohesion in the hands of faculty, moving participants from initial conversation to ownership and productive action. Hutchings, who has helped AAC&U leverage the power of the charrette in its LEAP Multi-State Collaborative and VALUE projects, calls it a “place of connectivity.” In her experience, she found the charrette generates broad faculty engagement with these results:

- ✓ Animates high-level outcomes for students and faculty.
- ✓ Creates a ‘pedagogical trading zone.’
- ✓ Surfaces connection across courses and contexts and promotes more coherent pathways for students.
- ✓ Provides rich, authentic evidence to inform improvement.
- ✓ Makes visible and brings value to the intellectual work that faculty do as teachers.⁵

Before and after the Assignment Design Charrette, faculty can read student work against Core Competency rubrics. The first scoring session, held prior to the charrette, helps faculty identify gaps or areas that need improvement. After the charrette, faculty test their assignments with students; a second reading of student work helps faculty assess and finalize their assignments. As faculty examine the impact of curricular choices on student learning, Learning Matters ensures that program objectives are well-aligned, and that assignments effectively advance student learning and growth.

⁵ Pat Hutchings, Laura Gambino, Bard Mello and Natasha Jankowski, “Assignment Design as a Hot Spot for Faculty and Institutional Collaboration: Lessons from NILOA’s Work with the Degree Qualifications Profile and Tuning,” AAC&U Annual Meeting, January 2016. Accessed at <https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/AM16/HUTCHINGS%20%20et%20al%20PPT.pdf>

Step-by-Step Assignment Design

There are several ways to approach step-by-step assignment design. Some of the most constructive ways are face-to-face workshops in a Center for Teaching and Learning seminar, or attending an Assignment Charrette, or sipping coffee with a colleague. You might also consider applying for a Learning Matters Mini-Grant and chewing this over with others in your department!

An alternative approach to assignment design, however, is the purpose of this Assessment Guide. We hope by postulating some steps below – framed around a sample assignment – that you'll be able to develop a better sense for approaching the Competencies and Abilities in your own courses, and that you find some combination of activities that works best for you. And please feel free to share any insights with us for the next edition of this Guide!

Important Note before Going Forward

For our purposes here, we're basing our example of step-by-step assignment design on an English composition course (ENG 101). This course has been designated for Integrative Learning and Written Communication. In this example, the instructor decided to address all four dimensions of Integrative Learning in a high-stakes assignment, and then deepened students' capacity for this competency by addressing those four dimensions in a *medium*-stakes final reflection, which we've also included here.

Whether you're building experience practicing a Core Competency or constructing an assignment meant to solicit maximum proficiency, we offer a couple tips we hope you find useful for creating high-stakes assignments as you consider your own course.

Designing a High-Stakes Assignment

Step 1: Focus first on a Core Competency or a Communication Ability

All courses designated with a Core Competency are also linked to a Communication Ability. It's difficult to design or revise an assignment with both a Competency and Ability in mind at the same time, so we recommend beginning with the Core Competency in question and then tackling the Communication Ability second. This approach reflects the trend of assignment development at the College since we created the rubrics. Of course, at some point, the medium or Ability will shape the assignment, and the way you address the Competency. (We will begin to turn our collective attention to the Abilities as more faculty feel confident about the Competencies.)

Step 2: Decide how you want to address the dimensions on the rubric

Depending on the course in question, you'll want to proceed with tentative decisions about how you address the dimensions on the rubric, in the context of the course as a whole. Do you want to focus first on a low-stakes assignment that addresses one or two dimensions? Do you want to scaffold your low-stakes assignments into a final high-stakes assignment? Do you want to address all the dimensions in a single high-stakes assignment?

It might be helpful to glance again at the Integrative Learning rubric and its four dimensions:

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING		
Dimension	Proficient - 4	Competent - 3
Connections Between and Among Academic Disciplines <i>Identifies and draws insight from connections across disciplinary perspectives, knowledge and skills.</i>	Synthesizes and/or draws conclusions by connecting examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	Connects and compares examples, facts, and/or theories from more than one field of study or perspective. Begins to draw conclusions.
Connections to Experience <i>Identifies and draws insight from connections across relevant learning experiences, including personal, co-curricular, and academic.</i>	Synthesizes connections among multiple learning experiences inside and outside of classroom to deepen understanding and broaden point of view.	Connects examples of personal or curricular learning to academic knowledge to deepen understanding.
Ability to Apply Learning across Diverse Contexts <i>Applies knowledge, skills, abilities, theories and/or methodologies across different learning experiences (inside or outside the classroom).</i>	Applies skills, knowledge, theories, and/or methodologies from one learning experience to another to offer solutions to a problem or issue.	Applies skills, knowledge, theories and/or methodologies from one learning experience to another to explain problem or issue.
Reflection and Self-Assessment <i>Demonstrates a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.</i>	Critically evaluates strengths and challenges; connects current sense of self to past and/or future selves across multiple and/or diverse contexts.	Describes and evaluates strengths and challenges. Begins to describe self over time and/or in different contexts. Demonstrates ability to reflect on experiences and/or learning.

You may also want to consider the level of students in your class, and what's appropriate for them. If it's an entry level course, is Novice or Developing (1 or 2) your minimum level? If it's a capstone or upper level course, can you aim for Competent or Proficient (3 or 4)?

Step 3: Consider the Core Competency and assignment within the context of your course syllabus and course learning objectives

As you know, it's helpful to think about where your assignment goals fit into the overall course objectives. That's true for this process, too. Consider the different moments where you might build the competencies into your course over a semester. Which assignment works best toward advancing the dimensions of the competency and the course objectives your class addresses?

Step 4: Build dimensions from the Core Competency into your assignment goal

Your revised assignment might consider three elements LaGuardia faculty and staff have found beneficial to supporting student learning:

- * A clearly stated and comprehensive **goal**.
- * A **description** of that goal, with clear directions for students.
- * A clear sequence of **staging**, with a task timeline.

Our ENG101 example comes from a course themed around legacies of chattel slavery and fascism. In this course, students wrote thesis-driven essays on Solomon Northup's *12 Years a Slave*, Stuart Hood and Litza Jansz's *Introducing Fascism: A Graphic Guide*, and Roy Scranton's *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*.

Here, the professor stressed the competency's emphasis on making connections between texts and synthesizing learning from one's own experience. These are two dimensions of Integrative Learning.

Take a look at the assignment **goal**, below, intended to prompt claim-driven paragraphs addressing two dimensions of Integrative Learning:

Assignment Goal: For this assignment your goal is to practice the college writing skills of argumentation, summary, comparison, and contrast while discussing the parts of *12 Years a Slave* that you believe are both *exceptional* and *identifiable*.

We see that the instructor had students create thesis-like claims around what they found *exceptional*, or different from their life experiences, and what they found *identifiable*, or relatable to their experiences.

These claims stressed the second dimension of Integrative Learning rubric (**Connections to Experience**), as well as the third (**Ability to Apply Learning Across Different Contexts**). As we'll see, the instructor saved the other two dimensions for the assignment's conclusion. Also note that the professor adapted the language of the rubric to their own assignment-specific terms.

Step 5: Clarify the role of Core Competency dimensions in the assignment description

In the assignment description, the professor clarified the stakes of the learning objectives. This meant addressing the assignment as both the argumentative essay and Integrative Learning. They did so in three ways:

- * By **defining key terms**.
- * By **linking the terms to key questions**.
- * By **offering suggestions for approaches to the assignment**.

Consider how each role appears below:

Assignment Description

Using the text *12 Years a Slave* and your own personal experiences and knowledge, you will write an argumentative essay with a thesis, topic sentences, textual evidence, and textual interpretation.

Your **argument, or thesis**, will offer a statement of claims, or a group of connected 'smaller arguments,' about the book *12 Years a Slave*. A claim is a 'little' or 'smaller' argument, and together a group of connected claims create one big 'thesis statement,' which might be anywhere from two to five sentences long.

To make this thesis, you will start by creating individual claims first. A **claim** is a 'belief' of yours about the book, which you will support, or back up, with evidence from the book.

This **evidence** will be in the form of passages from the book that help you explain your claim. You will "quote these passages" using "**quotation marks**" and references to page numbers in the text where you found these passages in parenthetical **citations** at the end of sentences where you quote (page numbers from the book come before the periods, or little dots, that end each sentence).

Each individual claim you believe about the book will answer one of two **key questions** of this assignment:

- The first question is, "**What about Solomon Northup's experience is exceptional, or unique?**" You will answer this question by making one or two claims about the exceptionalism of Northup's experiences in relation to your world, or our world, and these claims will form half of your thesis statement.
- The next one or two claims you make about Northup's text will answer the question, "**What about Solomon Northup's experience is identifiable, or similar, to your experiences or your world?**" You will answer this question by making one or two claims about what's *identifiable* in Northup's text.

This essay will have an **introduction** that contains the following elements: an opening "hook" to capture your reader's attention, your thesis statement, and a one-sentence summary of your conclusion.

This essay will also have a **conclusion** that goes into deeper reflection about what *you* learned from reading this text. This reflection should answer the questions:

- How has my own learning grown as a result of this reading and assignment?
- How has this text and/or assignment challenged you as a learner and writer, and how has your thinking changed as a result?
- What connections do I see between this text and conversations and/or texts in my other courses?

Step 6: Consider addressing dimensions in different sections of the assignment

As you can see from the above description, one trick to integrating multiple dimensions is *folding them into different parts* of the assignment.

For the example essay, the professor uses the conclusion to address two of the dimensions not addressed by the thesis questions for the assignment goal. In this case, this is where the instructor decided to address other aspects of Integrative Learning, particularly the fourth one, "Reflection and Self-Assessment." Note how the three questions for the Conclusion section above echo the rubric for Integrative Learning.

In response to this conclusion prompt, a student from Ghana wrote the following, excerpted verbatim:

before starting reading the book, I never like to know much about black people in America. Moreover, I had less knowledge about slavery in America, because most of my time spend in Africa with limited theory about slavery of African American never taught enslave people were molested that way. Also, the novel affected me emotionally, because of racism seen in our world today make me know the source of it.

Step 7: Create in-class opportunities for addressing each of the important elements

For the class in question, the instructor designated one large block of class time each for:

- * A directed **discussion** of the text that contained Integrative Learning prompts.
- * **Group-work** that prompted students to share their personal reflections.
- * **In-class writing** time for each of the main tasks associated with this assignment, including time to consider connections to other disciplines and courses.

Each paragraph of the essay might generate its own class activity, group conversation, and/or in-class writing in a low-stakes setting. At the end of these sessions, the instructor and students could decide how to transform in-class learning into out-of-class revisions for the formal essay. For this assignment, the professor used at least four class activities to analyze *12 Years a Slave* within an Integrative Learning framework. This class time was budgeted alongside other times for addressing other course objectives around argumentative essays, such as thesis statements, topic-sentence claims, integrating textual evidence, quoting and citing sources, analyzing sources, and developing critical thinking.

Step 8: Share the rubric and other assessment-materials with students

At an early, middle, or late stage of the assignment, you might consider sharing the relevant rubric with your students – either when you introduce the assignment, or during an in-class activity connected to the assignment.

You may want to give them the next chapter of this Guide, which frames the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities for students. Some faculty may want to share such materials and open them for discussion, while others may simply attach them to the assignment as take-home material.

Step 9: Deposit student work in Digication for formal assessment

One of the most important parts of this assignment design comes after the hard work is done! Please remember to encourage your students to deposit their work for our next Benchmark Reading. Directions and support for depositing is at the end of this guide.

Designing a Medium or Low-Stakes Assignment

In a separate assignment, an English 101 professor chose to address the dimensions of Integrative Learning in a medium-stakes final, in-class reflection. The reflection was worth 5% of the student's final grade. As you'll see, the prompts could easily have been broken into low-stakes assignments addressed at different points in the semester. Each faculty will find a strategy that works for them.

Step 1: To be clear, for the final reflection this professor took each dimension of Integrative Learning and stressed one element to create prompts that might solicit relevant writing from students, which meant asking students to reflect on the course as a whole.

For example, for the first dimension of Integrative Learning (Connections Between and Among Academic Disciplines) he asked, "How did this class connect to your other courses? State general connections and provide two examples."

In reply, a student from China wrote:

The text *12 Years a Slave* give me a better understanding about slavery, which is one of the main topics of my SSH101 class (Themes in American History to 1865). In this class and SSH101, we both discuss about slavery, urbanization, women's role in society.

For the question addressing the second dimension, he asked, "How did this class connect to your life experience outside the college?" A student from Ecuador replied:

The first way was it kind of helped me see who I am really trying this hard for. I am not only trying hard in school and outside of school for myself, but also for my daughter and throughout my writing, it helped me realize this. The second way is that this class opened up my eyes to certain things going on in the world. I was not a big fan of world news or the news in general, but this class helped me rethink my ways. Not only reading books are essential but a newspaper informs us a lot about the world, and we take this type of freedom of press for granted.

Step 2: For medium- or low-stakes assignments, we suggest aligning an activity or prompt with one or more dimensions, either separately or in sequence. We can see from the example below how closely this instructor hewed to the rubric:

Directions: Answer the following questions in 4-5 sentences each. Use examples to support any claims or statements you make. This is open book, open-note essay.

1. How did this class connect to your other courses? State general connections and provide two examples.
2. How did this class connect to your life experiences outside the college? State connections and provide one or two examples.
3. How can you take an idea, lesson, or text from this class and use it to solve problems in another class, or in your chosen program or major?

4. How did this class prepare you as a learner and/or writer for your future? How did it change you as a learner and/or writer?

Considerations for Step-by-Step Communication Ability Assignment Design

Step 1: Decide how the dimensions fit into your overall course.

Step 2: Decide how you want to address the dimensions on the rubric.

Step 3: Build dimensions from the Communication Ability into your assignment goal.

Step 4: Define the relationship to Communication Ability dimensions in the assignment description.

Step 5: Structure dimension-specific language into the assignment, such as “purpose, audience, and genre,” or “tone, volume, pace, and eye contact.”

Step 6: Scaffold the assignment to create in-class opportunities for addressing each of the important elements.

Step 7: Share the rubric and other assessment-materials with students.

Step 8: Deposit student work in Digication for assessment.

LaGuardia’s Core Competencies and Communication Abilities: Information for Students

LaGuardia’s *Core Competencies and Communication Abilities* focus on the 21st century learning skills you need for a Bachelor’s degree, a good job, and life-long learning. They ask you to develop your ability to use knowledge from your classes in new ways, building the thinking and problem solving skills that colleges and employers value.

LaGuardia has identified three Core Competencies and three Communication Abilities all students in all majors should build at LaGuardia:

Core Competencies			
Core Competency	Definition	In College	Beyond College
Inquiry/ Problem Solving	Gather and weigh evidence to draw conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions, dig deeper into issues and problems • Evaluate and synthesize information to solve problems 	Apply problem-solving skills that employers want. Make more effective life decisions.
Global Learning	Approach the world’s challenges and opportunities from multiple perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with issues of diversity, identity, power and privilege • Communicate across differences 	Ability to work in diverse global environments, communicate across differences, and navigate a changing world.
Integrative Learning	Make connections between ideas and apply them to new contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply learning across courses • Reflect on your own learning • Connect life, academic, and college activity experiences 	Develop a strong sense of personal and professional identity

Communication Abilities		
Ability	Definition	In College/Beyond College
Written Communication	Write with power in a range of styles	Reports, essays, requests, personal narratives
Oral Communication	Speak clearly to different audiences	Presentations, interviews, speeches, networking
Digital Communication	Combine images, text, video or other media in effective digital presentations	Web pages and portfolios, social media, personal branding, professional tools

Frequently Asked Questions: Learning Matters Pedagogy and Outcomes Assessment

FAQs: Pedagogy and Assignment Design

How many dimensions on the rubric does my assignment have to address?

Our faculty-created rubrics represent our shared definitions of our Core Competencies and Communication Abilities. Each dimension is a vital element. In crafting high stakes assignments, it's up to faculty, program directors, and department chairs to design the most appropriate ways to integrate the full dimensions of the Competency with course objectives and effective pedagogy.

Student learning artifacts will be scored holistically, on their demonstration of all dimensions. The number of dimensions addressed will shape the overall score given by readers.

In some cases, faculty teaching introduction level courses may decide to focus on building capacities with the competencies and abilities across a range of assignments, rather than address them all at once. A collection of assignments can be deposited for scoring if they are all included on a page in the ePortfolio. If you're interested in this, talk with the ePortfolio team about how to do it.

Should assignments provide the rubric?

The decision to share the rubric is up to individual faculty, but the Assessment Leadership Team encourage faculty to familiarize students with the Competencies and Abilities. Identifying points of connection between assignments and rubrics can provide students with a more advanced understanding of the goals of their classroom assignment and the overall course objectives. Setting aside some classroom time to let the students work out the meaning of the designated Competency and Ability can signal our commitment to shared learning objectives across time and across courses.

Is the "About Me" a good assignment for Integrative Learning?

An "About Me" assignment that addresses each of the rubric dimensions for Integrative Learning would be an excellent one for Integrative Learning. An "About Me" assignment that doesn't address the rubric dimensions would likely be a poor choice. Faculty teaching First Year Seminar (FYS) or introductory courses should be careful to create assignments that address as many dimensions as possible, even if expectations are framed for "Novice" (1) and "Developing" learners (2).

Should we deposit low-stakes assignments?

In short, no. Low-stakes assignments usually address fewer dimensions on the rubric, and often emerge from in-class situations where students are building capacities rather than demonstrating advanced learning. When low-stakes assignments get deposited, it creates confusion and skews the Benchmark reading results.

Can we vet assignments for deposit purposes?

It's a good idea to periodically discuss assignments intended to generate student work for deposit. This discussion will take place differently in different programs. Faculty and program directors should consult one another on a regular basis about how effectively assignments work in addressing the dimensions of the competencies and abilities. All programs can learn more about how their assignments work by requesting program-specific data from the College's annual Benchmark Readings, or by conducting their own Benchmark Reading.

Should assignments be included with deposits?

No, assignments should be not included for deposit. The purpose of Outcomes Assessment is to assess student learning over time in relation to the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities. The purpose of our assessment is *not* to evaluate the intention of an assignment, its goals or objectives, or its incorporation of the competencies and abilities. Assignments that address the dimensions on the rubrics of the competencies and abilities should tend to create student work that addresses those dimensions.

Should we set standard parameters for assignments?

Each program will decide on the best ways to create assignments that meet program, course, and institutional learning objectives. The closest idea to setting “standard parameters” for assignments is probably the dimensions on the rubrics for the competencies and abilities.

Should programs design assignments for all faculty to use?

Each program will decide on the best ways to create assignments that meet program, course, and institutional learning objectives. Some programs might find it helpful to create assignments or templates for full and/or part-time faculty. It's more important for faculty to workshop and discuss their assignments with other faculty, both in their program and beyond, in order to receive diverse feedback.

What resources exist for faculty to design assignments?

In addition to this Assignment Guide, faculty have access to several types of resources. At the most immediate level, faculty can consult curriculum maps for their programs and speak to their program directors.

Examples of student work at each level of the [Core Competency and Communication Ability Rubrics](#)’ learning points (1- Novice, 2- Developing, 3- Competent, 4- Proficient) can be found as “range-finders” in the College’s Norming Packets.

For initial assignment design, there are Learning Matters workshops and charrettes. For more sustained assignment revision, there are Learning Matters Mini-Grants and Center for Teaching and Learning seminars. For models of excellence, faculty can look at the [Learning Matters Assignment Library](#).

For conversations and consultations, faculty can contact their department liaison to the Assessment Leadership Team, as well as the Faculty Co-Directors of Assessment and Institutional Learning (currently Regina Lehman and Justin Rogers-Cooper).

How do we adjust assignments to fit the programmatic and Core Competencies?

Ideally, faculty will, over time, develop ways to link programmatic competencies and Core Competencies. In the best case, programmatic and Core Competencies will reinforce each other or meld together into a cohesive learning process.

In addition to consulting this Guide, faculty have multiple options for revising assignments alongside both programmatic and institutional learning objectives. First, they can look over their syllabus in consultation with a program director and decide how their programmatic course objectives connect with the dimensions of the designated Core Competency. Syllabi should carefully reflect where course objectives and dimensions are addressed, and how they are staged into assignments.

Further questions about incorporating dimensions into a specific course can also lead to consultations with their department's liaison from the Assessment Leadership Team, as well as with discussions with the Assessment Leadership Team.

What is the “core ePortfolio”?

While thousands of LaGuardia students build FYS ePortfolios each year, we want to systematically support sustained engagement in one “core” portfolio, and not build brand new ePortfolio for each course or academic benchmark. The lack of a coherent approach can confuse students and put extra demands on student and faculty time. It poses steep barriers to the use of ePortfolio in advisement and co-curricular learning. And it undercuts a central value proposition of integrative ePortfolio practice its capacity to help students reflect in ways that connect their learning across disciplines, semesters and the boundaries of the classroom.

Recognizing this challenge, we have been working to develop new approaches. One group of Student Affairs and ePortfolio staff has worked on extending the Graduation Plan, the educational and career planning tool embedded in FYS ePortfolios. Advisors are poised to begin using ePortfolio in on-going advisement, after the FYS. To support their work, this team considered students' needs at key advisement junctures and drafted career and transfer modules to embed into the spine of the underlying ePortfolio template.

Another group are crafting ways to more intentionally embed longitudinal ePortfolio practice into programmatic curricula, flanking and supporting a developmental approach to the Core Competencies. Supported with Mini-Grants and aiming to pilot test their assignments in Spring 2017, these projects will help students engage with a customized, discipline-based “Core ePortfolio” at multiple points in their educational journeys, from First Year to Capstone.

What counts as Written Communication?

In consultation with the rubric, any artifact of student work that communicates a purpose through an organized structure to an audience could possibly be scored as Written Communication.

Works that are not written would not count, such as videos, oral presentations, audio files, or the like.

Does a video count as Digital Communication? When does it count as Oral Communication?

Video is a versatile medium that can count for both, or either, Digital and Oral Communication.

The reason it counts for Digital is that it addresses what the Digital Communication rubric calls the “multimedia” or “multimodal” element of the digital ability – that is, as an *audiovisual* text video combines image, text, and sound to communicate purpose and organize ideas for an audience.

When used to address Oral Communication, video should primarily present students oral abilities. Reviewing the Oral Communication rubric should clearly indicate how the video should document a student's oral ability.

How many Competencies and Abilities should be taught in First Year Seminar?

Ideally all the competencies and abilities should be addressed in FYS courses using a range of assignments and activities from low stakes to high stakes, graded and ungraded.

In terms of deposits for assessment, that varies and depends on the FYS course. For example, in LIF101, one deposit is made for the Integrative Learning competency and Digital ability.

How do we think about design and balance for composing Digital Communication?

In terms of the multimedia element of Digital Communication, it's preferable that the juxtaposition of different media (text, image, sound, etc.) be balanced with one another.

For example, one illustrative image accompanying eight pages of text, with little discernable relationship between the two, would probably score very low as an artifact of the student's digital ability. If the text engaged more creatively with that image, and thus the two forms of media relayed meanings together more forcefully, this would presumably advance the purpose of the communication better – and at the same time, reveal more of the student's digital ability.

In terms of design, we might think in much the same spirit. The design elements on an ePortfolio, for example, should work in balance with the content, purpose, and organization of the information being communicated. They should work together to advance the communication by the student. Design elements should not necessarily be purely decorative, visually appealing, or complex for their own sake. Instead, they should enhance and advance the purpose, organization, and content of the matter being communicated. The same is true for video – whatever editing and effects are included should enhance and advance, and not distract, from the message or content of the piece.

FAQs: Annual Benchmark Reading & Norming Sessions

What are Benchmark Readings?

Benchmark Readings are an essential part of what's called Outcomes Assessment, which is a national practice of every College and University. Outcomes Assessment is the process by which the College quantifies student learning as an output of classroom instruction. That is to say, this process tells us what common skills and common higher-order learning has occurred at the College. It also tells us about how this learning has grown over time.

The Benchmark Reading process involves reading and scoring student artifacts from across every discipline deposited in courses for the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities. It's an excellent opportunity to learn more about our common teaching and learning goals for Inquiry & Problem Solving, Integrative Learning, and Global Learning, as well as Written, Oral, and Digital Communication.

Our Core Competencies and Abilities are crucial for shaping student success, life-long learners, and job-ready graduates. Participating in this process is an important compliment to the on-going work around building and implementing assignments, some of which are now available in our new [Learning Matters Assignment Library](#).

Why do I keep hearing the word artifact?

The word artifact refers to the student work deposited for scoring (for example, a student paper deposited to be scored against the Written Communication rubric). This is just Outcomes Assessment nomenclature.

How do we score an ePortfolio?

An ePortfolio can provide a powerful site for students to demonstrate Digital Communication. The new Digication interface permits great flexibility in digital design. Students can use different

elements of multimodal composition – color, images, videos, and page design – to communicate with power.

An ePortfolio can also be a way to build and document Integrative Learning. Because an ePortfolio is a connected collection of artifacts, and Integrative Learning is all about connection and reflection, the two can meld together in a powerful synthesis. It is possible to use the ePortfolio to connect multiple artifacts for deposit. For more information, contact the ePortfolio staff.

What is an 88? When do I assign an 88?

An “88” refers to the scoring code for Benchmark Readings assigned to student work that does not meet *any* of the dimensions on a rubric. Not all artifacts will meet every dimension or criteria on the rubric. Student work that achieves even a “Novice” designation on *one* of the dimensions, it likely deserves a score of 1. Determining the score of an artifact that does not meet the criteria of every dimension is the purpose of norming sessions.

What should we score student work that only address one or two dimensions?

The most important thing to know about scoring is that the College’s Outcomes Assessment uses “Sympathetic Holistic Scoring,” which means that scorers assign student work a 1, 2, 3, or 4 (Novice, Developing, Competent, Proficient) based on the entire artifact. They do not assign each dimension of the rubric a different score based on the artifact, although many scorers do consider this technique in arriving at their score.

With this in mind, in general it is not possible for an artifact of student work to receive a “4” (Proficient) if it doesn’t address all of the dimensions on a rubric. Likewise, an artifact of student work that is “Proficient” in three of our dimensions is also *not* necessarily “Proficient” holistically: it is likely a “3” (Competent).

Following this logic, an artifact of student work that scores a “2” (Developing) in two dimensions is no higher than a “2” holistically, and possibly a “1” (Novice). Different scorers may decide to holistically score it a 1 or a 2. These represent the range of possible scores in this case. Such an artifact will never score a 3 or 4.

Can annotated bibliographies ok to be scored?

In general, it’s hard to say. Artifacts of student work should address as many dimensions on the designated rubric as possible. It’s difficult to see how a traditional annotated bibliography could be scored as Inquiry and Problem Solving. It’s possible that by summarizing different texts alongside some kind of personal reflection a student *might* address one dimension on either the Global Learning or Integrative Learning rubric, and perhaps one or two dimensions on the Written Communication Ability rubric.

The Assessment Leadership Team does not recommend a traditional annotated bibliography as a robust artifact of student work that addresses meaningful student learning associated with the College’s Core Competencies.

How should faculty score an artifact of student work that they don’t understand or in which there are recognizable inaccuracies?

Artifacts of student work deposited for Outcomes Assessment should be legible to a college-wide audience. If the artifact is simply unrecognizable, it should generally be scored an “88.”

There are some exceptions to this, but those exceptions can be addressed through the norming of scorers for Benchmark Readings.

If there are recognizable inaccuracies, these may or may not affect the holistic score related to the Core Competency and/or Communication Ability. The primary elements being scored for an artifact of student work are its expressions of dimensions connected to the rubric.

When it comes to the Communication Abilities, however, part of the rubric explicitly addresses whether the artifact of student work is able to distinguish fact from opinion. When scoring on these rubrics, scorers should factor inaccuracies into their holistic score.

How difficult should it be for student work to achieve a “4” on the rubric?

What the rubric calls “Proficient” (4) reflects high but achievable expectations for graduating LaGuardia students. For entering students, Developing (2) might be a more appropriate level of expectation.

As faculty teams created our rubrics, they were careful to create an “achievable 4.” The Assessment Leadership Team reviewed draft rubrics to align them with national standards for two-year colleges. To learn more about shared expectations for student work, all faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in LaGuardia’s annual Benchmark Readings, a valuable opportunity to connect the rubrics with college-wide examples of student learning.

Should programs do their own Benchmark Readings?

Programs could do their own Benchmark Readings or join in the college-wide process. The advantage of doing their own readings is threefold: a) immediate access to data about student learning; b) a deeper understanding by program faculty about how their assignments are working; and c) a deeper understanding by program faculty about the Core Competencies and Communication Abilities.

An alternative to a program conducting a Benchmark Reading is for the program to request that the Assessment Leadership Team collect additional data from courses on the program curriculum map. Since this is a pilot program, please indicate this preference to the Faculty Co-Directors of Assessment and Institutional Learning by October 31 of the academic calendar year (currently Regina Lehman and Justin Rogers-Cooper).

How do we score artifacts in a language other than English?

No one is obligated to score artifacts in a language other than English. In some cases, programs that operate in non-English languages may want to conduct their own Benchmark Readings with fluent faculty members to assess student learning in their program. Non-English language artifacts get a score of “99.”

How do we score PowerPoints?

Faculty are likely to encounter PowerPoints when assessing for Digital Communication. As for all assessment, the first thing to do is closely re-read the relevant rubric.

As with any Communication Ability, the purpose, organization, and audience for the PowerPoint should be evident. As the rubric suggests, forms of communication that make claims with supporting evidence generally score higher than communication that summarizes, recites, or reports information. The same is true for PowerPoints.

In terms of Digital Communication in particular, PowerPoints typically address the “multi-media” or “multi-modal” element of what the college values as “digital.” This means that the PowerPoint should contain a balanced composition of different media, usually images, graphs, tables and text that advance the purpose of the overall communication taking place. Scores should comfortably intuit the connections between different elements of the PowerPoint.

Why don't we look at assignments when scoring artifacts?

There are philosophical reasons both *for* and *against* the practice of reviewing assignments in assessment. At LaGuardia, we don't do it and we can't make exceptions. One key reason why we don't review assignments is because we are measuring the artifact as an *outcome* of student learning, not the *intention* or *prompts* that led to it. Secondly, we cannot review assignments as part of the Benchmark Reading process because formal evaluation of faculty assignments should be undertaken with careful concern for contractual obligations.

Who should participate in Benchmark Readings?

We urge all faculty and staff to participate in this process, whether you have done so recently or would be doing so for the first time. It's a great way to understand student learning at the College across the disciplines, and to see expressions of our common goals.

How long does the process take?

The Benchmark Reading process involves attending two meetings over Fall II/Spring I for norming and reflection (see the dates and times below), as well as scoring student artifacts themselves, which you can do anywhere at your convenience.

How do I deposit assignments?

If you need help, the CTL will provide an ePortfolio Consultant who can attend your classes and guide your students through the entire depositing process. If you want help, please complete this form: <https://www.laguardia.edu/eportfolio-workshop-request/>.

If you want your students to deposit on their own, these tutorials will be very helpful:

A. How to deposit assessment assignments in Digication

- [Guide to deposit assignments to assessment](#)
- [Video tutorial to deposit assignments to assessment](#)

B. What you need to know about videotaping

- [Request a Student Technology Mentor Form](#)

Faculty should review the following document: "How to Review Assessment Deposits from Students," which indicates if students have deposited their work.

- [Guide to review assessment deposits from students](#)

Please feel free to contact Thomas Rospigliosi (trosigliosi@lagcc.cuny.edu x8405) if you have questions or need assistance with the technical issues.