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**ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY USING AN AAC&U VALUE
RUBRIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON**

Summer 2023 Report

Assessment of Personal Responsibility Using an AAC&U VALUE Rubric

Personal Responsibility is responding wisely to current situations and surroundings (Downing, 2012). The Texas Core Curriculum emphasizes the essential knowledge and skills that college graduates should possess. Personal Responsibility (PR) is one of the six Texas Core Curriculum Objectives required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB, 2013). The THECB defined Personal Responsibility as "the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making."

Educators may assess Personal Responsibility by having students write about global learning that includes the Spanish language and culture, analyze, and write about the development of a society, or respond to an ethical dilemma. In this study, Personal Responsibility was measured in student essays using a well-vetted rubric developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#), 2009). At UT Arlington, a cyclical rotation plan is followed whereby six Texas Core Curriculum Objectives are assessed every three years. A multi-year assessment cycle is ideal because the THECB requirements vary for the six Foundational Component Areas (FCA). Personal Responsibility assessment is required within FCAs, such as communication, language philosophy and culture, American history, and government/political science. This report summarizes Personal Responsibility data collected from the American History, Language Philosophy and Culture, and Social and Behavioral Sciences courses.

Method

Participants

Written samples of the Signature Assignments of 165 enrolled undergraduate students were collected from three courses (HIST 1331, SPAN 2300, and SPAN 2310). These courses are designated as part of the core curriculum at UT Arlington. More than half of the student participants were male (58.79%; n = 97), and the remaining were female (41.21%; n = 68). The racial and ethnic composition of the participants was diverse, which also characterized the overall campus student population. Nearly half of the participants identified as Hispanic (46.06%; n = 76). The next largest groups identified as White (21.82%; n = 36) and Asian (16.36%; n = 68). Initial enrollment year at UTA for most students (69.70%; n = 115) was the 2021-2022 academic year (see Table 1).

Table 1. Student Demographics

Categorical Information	N	Percentage
Gender		
Female	68	41.21%
Male	97	58.79%
Racial/Ethnic Description		
Asian	27	16.36%
Black, African American	19	11.52%
Foreign, Non-Resident Alien	05	2.03%
Hispanic, All Races	76	46.06%
Two or More Races/Ethnicities	02	2.21%
White, Caucasian	36	21.82%
Level		
Freshman	72	43.64%
Sophomore	48	29.09%
Junior	23	13.94%
Senior	20	12.12%
Fifth Year	2	1.21%
First Generation Student		
Yes	77	46.67%
No	88	53.33%
Pell Grant Recipient		
Yes	72	43.64%
No	93	56.36%
UTA Enrollment Year		
2021 – 2022	115	69.70%
2020 – 2021	28	16.97%
2019 – 2020 and prior	22	13.33%
Transfer Student		
Yes	27	16.36%
No	138	83.36%

By class level, 43.64% (n = 72) of the students were freshmen, 29.09% (n = 48) were sophomores, 29.09% (n = 48) were juniors, 12.12% (n = 20) were seniors, and 1.21% (n = 2) were fifth-year students. Almost half of the participating students (49.70%; n = 82) represented the College of Engineering, and the other significant portion (33.95%; n = 56) represented three colleges (Liberal Arts, Business, and Nursing), but overall, nine UT Arlington colleges and schools were represented (see Table 2).

Table 2: Students by Colleges/Schools

College/School	N	Percentage
College of Architecture, Planning & Public Affairs	6	3.64%
College of Nursing and Health Innovation	13	7.87%
College of Business	19	11.52%
College of Engineering	82	49.70%
College of Liberal Arts	24	14.55%
College of Science	7	4.24%
Division of Student Success	11	6.66%
Honors College	1	0.61%
School of Social Work	2	1.21%

Procedure

Undergraduate students enrolled in sections of American History and Language, Philosophy, and Culture courses in the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters completed Signature Assignments approved by the UT Arlington Core Curriculum Committee. These assignments directed students to write an essay describing their global learning about a language and culture, analyze the impact of modern development on society, or respond to a moral dilemma or cultural practice.

After completion, ungraded student samples were collected from their departments. In preparation for the UT Arlington Scoring Day, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting then de-identified these samples by assigning tracking numbers and removing any personal identification information (e.g., the student's name, class, semester, etc.) to mitigate rater bias and protect the confidentiality of student information.

Assessment Instrument

Evidence of Personal Responsibility within the Signature Assignments was assessed using the AAC&U Global Learning VALUE Rubric (AAC&U, 2009). A team of faculty representing institutions across the United States developed the rubric for use across academic disciplines as part of a national initiative called Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE; AAC&U, 2009). The AAC&U Global Learning VALUE Rubric is organized into six dimensions: 1) Global Self-Awareness, 2) Perspective Taking, 3) Cultural Diversity, 4) Personal and Social Responsibility, 5) Understanding Global Systems, and 6) Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts. For details of all dimensions, see the Appendix A.

The rubric contains a matrix that provides a narrative description of the expected quality of work and corresponding point values for scoring the six measures. The rubric describes each dimension and uses a four-point scoring scale (see Appendix A). The rubric is a matrix that provides a narrative description of the expected quality of work and corresponding point values for scoring the six measures. The point values range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating baseline performance (Benchmark-1), 2 indicating approaching milestone (Milestone-2), 3 indicating achieved milestone (Milestone-3), and 4 indicating the highest mastery (Capstone-4) of Personal Responsibility. AAC&U, the authors of the rubric, permit zero ratings if the paper does not meet the minimum content or quality standards defined in the rubric. The attainment target (numerical ratings) was set above the benchmark according to AAC&U recommendations (Greenhoot & Bernstein, 2012). The attainment target was set at a score of 2 (Milestone-2).

Raters, Rater Calibration, and Scoring

Sixteen qualified UTA faculty/staff raters with advanced degrees relevant to the core component being scored were recruited to participate in an in-person scoring session held on campus in July-August 2023. De-identified student papers were rated using the AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Personal Responsibility (PR). Each rater was assigned a code to use in completing the rating worksheet, which allowed the assessment team to track the papers rated by each person and ensure rater anonymity in the final dataset.

On the scoring day, raters gathered and completed a facilitated rater-calibration process. Following an overview of the rating process and the rubric, raters engaged in a facilitated discussion about the rating dimensions and scale on the rubric, intending to narrow the range of possible interpretations for each dimension. Next, raters reviewed a sample anchor paper and assigned ratings, followed by a facilitated discussion of assigned ratings to align the rater interpretation and application of the rubric more closely.

Next, the actual scoring process began. Each paper was assigned to at least two raters, and each rater scored the paper independently using the rubric. If the values of the skill measure scores for a paper from the two raters were identical or within one point difference, then the two scores were considered in agreement and averaged. For example, if Rater A scored the Cultural Diversity measure with a value of 2 and Rater B scored the same measure with a value of 3, then the rating was considered in agreement, and scores for that dimension were averaged, resulting in a score value of 2.5. If the scores from the two raters differed by more than two points, then a third rater was assigned the paper. In

such cases, three scores were averaged together to determine the final score.

Analysis and Results

Inter-rater Agreement

When scoring began, raters read the papers and scored each dimension with the rubric on the four-point scale. Scores were gathered and analyzed to determine the agreement defined for this rating activity as two assigned ratings within one rating interval of each other. Each score was calculated as the average of the two rater scores if the values assigned by the raters differed by one point or less.

Table 3. *Scoring Agreement Percentage Among Raters for PR Skills Dimensions*

Dimension (Global Learning VALUE Rubric)	Percentages
Global Self-Awareness	74%
Perspective Taking	70%
Cultural Diversity	80%
Personal and Social Responsibility	81%
Understanding Global Systems	78%
Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts	81%

Note: If values assigned by the raters differed by one point or less, it was counted as agreement. The agreement percentage was computed by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of ratings.

The percentage of agreement between raters was conducted to see how frequently the two raters agreed on scoring for the same student and to gauge the effectiveness of the assessment process. The percentage of agreement among raters for each category remained between 70% and 81% for the six PR categories (see Table 3). Generally, a minimum of 70% inter-rater agreement is considered a baseline required agreement. In the scoring process, the agreement between raters was 70% and above for all dimensions. The agreement scores above 70% indicate the scoring is reliable, and two raters assigned similar scores to a student's work.

Apart from the simple percentage agreements, researchers widely measure the reliability of rating agreements between different raters to eliminate chance agreements. All raters who participated in the scoring process have advanced degrees and work experience and attended the same training just before the scoring session. Hence, the probability of chance agreement was very low, but inter-rater agreement was computed to follow best research practices. Inter-rater reliability is the consistency among raters when

scoring the same subjects independently. The extent to which different raters agree on their judgments establishes the validity and credibility of measurements or ratings.

The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) determined the reliability of the inter-rater agreement levels. High ICC values indicate more agreement between rater scores. Commonly accepted guidelines were used to interpret the ICC results: the range of 0.40 to 0.74 is considered fair to good inter-rater agreement, with results above 0.74 classified as excellent inter-rater agreement and results lower than .40 considered poor inter-rater agreement (Fleiss, 1986; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). The dimensions with the highest ICC values, Personal and Social Responsibility (ICC= 0.55) and Global Self-Awareness (ICC = 0.45), showed good inter-rater agreement. The ICC values for the remaining four dimensions remained below 0.40. This low level of ICC suggests that applying the rubric to the assignment may not be aligned well. However, it needs further investigation to pinpoint the reason for low ICC values for those four dimensions (see Table 4).

Table 4. Intraclass Correlation Coefficient for Personal Responsibility Skills Dimensions

Dimension (Global Learning VALUE Rubric)	Coefficient
Global Self-Awareness	0.45
Perspective Taking	0.31
Cultural Diversity	0.33
Personal and Social Responsibility	0.55
Understanding Global Systems	0.32
Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts	0.25

Note 1: less than 0.40 = poor agreement; between .40 and .74 = fair to good agreement; greater than .74 = excellent agreement.

Note 2: The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated as a two-way random effects model. Values in this model type with random rater pairings are typically expected to be lower than those where rater pairings are fixed throughout the rating day.

Students Performance

The final data set contains rating scores on the six dimensions, and all student papers (n = 165) were rated on the scoring day. Across the six dimensions, students scored highest (mean = 1.99) in the Global Self-Awareness, and the Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts category had the lowest scores (mean = 1.45). A rating of about two indicates that dimension milestones were met, and a lower rating indicates the skill is developing at benchmark level. For the analyzed data, means and standard deviations for each dimension of the PR rubric are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Means for Personal Responsibility Skills Measure Scores

Measurement Dimensions	N	Mean	SD
Global Self-Awareness	165	1.99	0.90
Perspective Taking	165	1.74	0.87
Cultural Diversity	165	1.77	0.79
Personal and Social Responsibility	165	1.80	0.87
Understanding Global Systems	165	1.95	0.78
Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts	165	1.45	0.76

Overall, the average performance of these UT Arlington undergraduate students was at the milestone level on the first five dimensions. The student scores were high (almost 2.0) for Global Self-Awareness and Understanding Global Systems. For dimensions of perspective-taking, Cultural Diversity, and Personal and Social Responsibility, students average score remained around 1.75. Students' performance on the Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts dimension remained lower than the other five dimensions (mean = 1.45).

A pattern of strengths and weaknesses in the written work produced by this sample of undergraduates emerged from assessing the student work samples. In summary, students scored highest in *Global Self-Awareness and Understanding Global Systems*. Based on the average scores, attainment targets (scores closer to two) were met for all *Personal Responsibility* measures except Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts. A rating closer to two indicates that dimension milestones were met. The low rating of 1.45 for Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts indicates students performed at benchmark level for the dimension.

Observations and Limitations

The report compiles information from student work to assess Personal Responsibility skill mastery. Work was sampled from three FCA courses in American History, Language Philosophy and Culture, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. A rubric developed by the AAC&U to assess Personal Responsibility was used to rate sampled student work.

Although students' work was rated at milestone level for the first five dimensions (Global Self-Awareness, Perspective Taking, Cultural Diversity, Personal and Social Responsibility, and Understanding Global Systems), there is still enough room for

improvement. Instructors may include examples and activities related to all measurement dimensions of the rubric for Personal Responsibility skills to increase the average score to 3, which is the upper limit of the milestone. The lower scores might be because the assignment did not explicitly prompt students to apply their knowledge to contemporary global contexts. Additionally, the lower scores may indicate the curriculum should directly address Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts areas by adding examples and activities to help students practice this skill.

Overall, this initial assessment of *Personal Responsibility*, a THECB Core Objective, raised important points. On average, the student scores were well above the benchmark for all dimensions of the rubric and can be further improved. The levels of agreement suggest that the rater calibration activities were helpful, and raters have a common understanding of all dimensions of the Global Learning VALUE Rubric that was used for the assessment of Personal Responsibility. Future studies will continue to examine trends in student performance related to these measures among undergraduate students at UT Arlington.

There were some limitations in the development of this report those are worth mentioning. The small number of participants limits the analytical approaches that could be used to examine this assessment. The small sample size masks several variations in the population data, and results may change with a larger sample. More samples should include representation from courses in the Communication and Government/Political Science areas. That said, despite the small sample size, the sample was representative of the rich diversity of the campus population at UT Arlington. In addition, sample essays were drawn from only three courses, which could have limited the results of this study. However, students represented all nine schools and colleges and thus characterized the academic community at large. Conceptually, each FCA should contain a representative sample of the academic community because all students must take forty-two hours of approved Texas Core Curriculum courses regardless of their major.

Alignment between the Signature Assignments and the VALUE rubrics is essential for a reliable rating of student work. The rater calibration activity and subsequent discussion of the anchor paper improved the interrater reliability. However, alignment between the rubric and the Signature Assignments was not straightforward in some cases, resulting in a higher rate of zero scores for some dimensions. While the composition of the Signature Assignment is up to the instructor, some suggestions for aligning signature assignments with the rubric may need to be offered to instructors whose courses are included in the evaluation sample.

It is also important to note that the majority of UTA student papers included in the rating activity (72.73%) were written by freshmen (43.64%) and sophomore (29.09%) students. Therefore, an average score of 2 indicates that these students are at the milestone level, which is notable given that most participants are first- and second-year students in their college careers.

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Appendix A: AAC&U Global Learning VALUE Rubric

GLOBAL LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org



Definition

Global learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and 3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Global Self-Awareness	Effectively addresses significant issues in the natural and human world based on articulating one's identity in a global context.	Evaluates the global impact of one's own and others' specific local actions on the natural and human world.	Analyzes ways that human actions influence the natural and human world.	Identifies some connections between an individual's personal decision-making and certain local and global issues.
Perspective Taking	Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions (i.e. cultural, disciplinary, and ethical.)	Synthesizes other perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when investigating subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies and explains multiple perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when exploring subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies multiple perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own positioning (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).
Cultural Diversity Capstone	Adapts and applies a deep understanding of multiple worldviews, experiences, and power structures while initiating meaningful interaction with other cultures to address significant global problems.	Analyzes substantial connections between the worldviews, power structures, and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts, incorporating respectful interactions with other cultures. 2	Explains and connects two or more cultures historically or in contemporary contexts with some acknowledgement of power structures, demonstrating respectful interaction with varied cultures and worldviews.	Describes the experiences of others historically or in contemporary contexts primarily through one cultural perspective, demonstrating some openness to varied cultures and worldviews.
Personal and Social Responsibility	Takes informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges in global systems and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.	Analyzes the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of global systems and identifies a range of actions informed by one's sense of personal and civic responsibility.	Explains the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of local and national decisions on global systems.	Identifies basic ethical dimensions of some local or national decisions that have global impact.
Understanding Global Systems	Uses deep knowledge of the historic and contemporary role and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems to develop and advocate for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems in the human and natural worlds.	Analyzes major elements of global systems, including their historic and contemporary interconnections and the differential effects of human organizations and actions, to pose elementary solutions to complex problems in the human and natural worlds.	Examines the historical and contemporary roles, interconnections, and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems within the human and the natural worlds.	Identifies the basic role of some global and local institutions, ideas, and processes in the human and natural worlds.
Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts	Applies knowledge and skills to implement sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address complex global problems using interdisciplinary perspectives independently or with others.	Plans and evaluates more complex solutions to global challenges that are appropriate to their contexts using multiple disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Formulates practical yet elementary solutions to global challenges that use at least two disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Defines global challenges in basic ways, including a limited number of perspectives and solutions.