DePaul University's School for New Learning Rubric Integration Project

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Context for Use of the VALUE Rubric for Integrative Learning

The faculty of DePaul University's School for New Learning (SNL) Bachelor of Arts program used the VALUE rubric for integrative learning to improve the assessment of a capstone assignment called the Advanced Project (AP). The rubric increased clarity in articulating assessment criteria and, with revisions to conform to our own language and expectations, improved consistency in providing student feedback. Also, based on preliminary scoring results, the rubric promises to provide a tool for ongoing program assessment. The process of aligning the VALUE rubric and training faculty in its use took our Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (TLA) about three years to accomplish.

The School for New Learning offers a unique approach to learning for adults (twenty-four years old and up) through customized undergraduate and graduate programs in which students enhance their knowledge and skills in order to achieve personal and professional goals. Most of our degrees are competence based; connect learning from experience through the practice of reflection with new learning; and guide independent inquiry and mentoring with an academic committee that includes a student, faculty mentor, and professional advisor. Undergraduate students reveal the degree to which they demonstrate their learning in a final assignment called the AP. This project is not completed in a specific course; rather, it is developed independently over three to six months with the guidance of the committee, similar to an undergraduate senior thesis or project, and assessed by the committee upon completion. While we had criteria for assessing the AP, the TLA concluded that a rubric could foster more consistent use of the criteria by faculty and professional advisors, and increase transparency and guidance for students. We reviewed several of the VALUE rubrics and chose the integrative learning rubric (ILR) because it aligned with the AP criteria and with our meta-competencies—five abilities that are developed throughout our curriculum and demonstrated in the AP. The TLA also determined that using a nationally validated tool as a means to analyze SNL undergraduate learning would be beneficial for comparing student learning to national standards for college-level learning.

Integration of the Integrative Learning Rubric

Phase I. TLA members and several faculty mentors tested the alignment of the ILR with our own criteria for AP assessment by conducting an inter-rater reliability workshop where participants rated sample APs using both the existing AP criteria and the VALUE ILR. While there was some inter-rater reliability with the existing criteria, there was low inter-rater reliability with the VALUE rubric because the faculty mentors were unclear on definitions and terminology and had not used these criteria to guide their students through the project. In fact, faculty mentors seemed to resist using criteria that had not been developed "in house." Based on this feedback, TLA decided to take the existing AP criteria and meta-competencies and align them with the VALUE ILR criteria, which resulted in an adapted form of the VALUE ILR that focuses on our five meta-competencies: learning from experience, inquiry, decision making, writing, and self-assessment.

Phase II. The TLA hosted another inter-rater reliability workshop to examine the extent to which student learning on APs demonstrated ILR criteria, ILR criteria correlated with existing AP criteria, and faculty increased reliability in rating APs, using the modified rubric. Again, several faculty mentors and TLA members participated in this workshop. We found that the rubric was effective in establishing consistent ratings across users; the rubric was effective in assessing various types of APs, which is particularly important for our interdisciplinary program in which students might focus on the arts, humanities, sciences, professional learning, or an integration of ideas drawn from these; the language adapted from the VALUE ILR was helpful in establishing clarity for assessing SNL meta-competencies and identified developmental levels that were useful in establishing consistent ratings of student achievement on AP criteria; and the self-assessment criterion needed to be tailored to the AP and not on learning throughout the program.

Phase III. In Phase III, we distributed the rubric (see fig. 2) to all faculty mentors whose students anticipated completing their APs during the winter and spring 2012 terms. Faculty mentors were asked to use the rubric to assess their students' projects, and were invited to have students and professional advisors use it as well. We received 103 AP rubrics, representing forty-three projects/students. Of that total, forty-three were assessed by the student, forty-two by the

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faculty mentor, and seventeen by the professional advisor. Ten projects had rubric assessments from all academic committee members: the faculty mentor, the student, and the professional advisor. For data analysis, numerical values were associated with qualitative rubric levels. Using a 1 rating as exemplary (capstone) and 5 as not evident, the mean across all criteria and assessors was between 1.35 and 2.09. Standard deviations were less than 0.88 in all but two cases (1.11 for faculty mentors rating learning experience and 1.01 for students rating self-assessment). The difference in ratings among students, faculty mentors, and professional advisors was not statistically significant. (See fig. 1 for data analysis).

We found that the meta-competencies were demonstrated in the AP and that members of the academic committee agreed. These results have been shared with faculty and with the university's assessment committee, and we are collecting recommendations for how the rubric and results can be used to improve curricula and inform mentoring practice.

Discussion and Future Work

While common expectations for a passing score on an AP were unclear at the beginning of this integration process, we found that adapting the VALUE ILR to our program's existing AP criteria and meta-competencies was a valuable approach that had several benefits. For members of the academic committees—students, faculty mentors, and professional advisors—it provided a common language and criteria for planning and reflecting upon the process and outcomes of APs; enabled the development of shared expectations for self-assessment and reflection built into the AP process; and increased consistency in guiding and assessing students' learning. For the college, adapting the VALUE ILR provided a focused description of our accomplishments that, in turn, enabled us to promote our achievements; enabled the collection of systematic information on measurable outcomes for ongoing program improvement; and increased the college's influence by aligning our outcomes with national standards.

Ongoing work will focus on curriculum and mentoring initiatives. Plans include revising AP requirements to specify reflection and self-assessment features; instituting the rubric as a component of the AP contract that formalizes the academic committee's expectations; requiring all committee members to complete rubric assessments upon AP completion; and including rubric workshops for professional advisors and faculty mentors. As we collect the full

complement of rubric ratings for each project over time, we will analyze the correlation among committee members and determine whether rubric revisions are needed. The results will reflect and inform our progress toward achieving shared expectations and common indicators for assessing meta-competencies, giving an informed and reliable picture of student learning and program effectiveness.
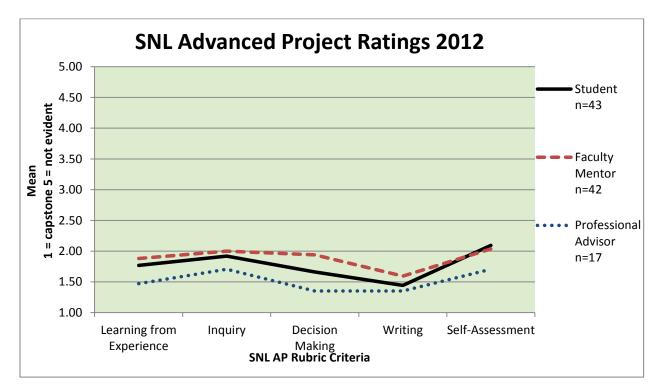
Figure 1. School of New Learning Advanced Project rubric data analysis.

Rating Scores and Standard Deviations for Each Competency

Assessor		Learning from Experience	Inquiry	Decision Making	Writing	Self-Assessment
Student n=43	Mean	1.77	1.92	1.66	1.44	2.09
	Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	0.87	0.73	0.68	0.54	1.01
Faculty n=42	Mean	1.88	2.00	1.94	1.60	2.04
	Median	1.50	2.00	2.00	1.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	1.11	0.83	0.77	0.80	0.83
Professional Advisor n=17	Mean	1.47	1.71	1.35	1.35	1.71
	Median	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	0.51	0.77	0.49	0.49	0.69

Figure 2. SNL Advanced Project Assessment Rubric

Instructions: Please circle a cell on each row of the rubric as it best describes the Advanced Project.

Check if you are: Faculty Mentor _____   **Student Author** _____   **Professional Advisor** _____

Complete: Faculty Mentor Name: _____   **AP Title** _____

	Capstone				Not Evident
Learning from Experience *Demonstrates connection between personal or professional experience and interest in a particular problem, issue, or theory*	Contextualizes personal or professional experience within the <u>particular</u> problem, issue, or theory	Relates personal or professional experience to the <u>particular</u> problem, issue, or theory	Explains personal or professional experience and interest in a <u>general</u> problem, issue, or theory	<u>Identifies</u> personal or professional experience and summarizes a <u>general</u> problem, issue, or theory	No discussion of personal or professional experience No evidence of discussion of a problem, issue, or theory
Inquiry *Demonstrates understanding of the broader context of a particular problem, issue, or theory*	<u>Synthesizes</u> what others have said/done about a given problem, issue, or theory and accesses appropriate/related existing resources.	<u>Analyzes</u> the context of what others have said/done about a given problem, issue, or theory and accesses appropriate/related existing resources.	<u>Summarizes</u> what others have said/done about a given problem, issue, or theory and accesses appropriate/related existing resources.	<u>Describes</u> broader context of a particular problem, issue, or theory, but <u>no evidence of access</u> to appropriate/related existing resources/literature	No evidence of understanding of broader context of a particular problem, issue, or theory, nor access to appropriate/related existing resources/literature

	Capstone				Not Evident
Decision Making *Demonstrates use of direct investigation, hands-on experience, application of theories or secondary analysis to independently address the problem, issue, or theory, and shows how this method connects to the larger theoretical framework and standards in the field.*	<u>Chooses and explains appropriate</u> direct investigation, hands-on experience, theory application, and/or secondary analysis to independently address the problem/issue/theory. <u>Justifies connections</u> with the larger theoretical framework.	<u>Chooses and summarizes appropriate</u> direct investigation, hands on experience, theory application, and/or secondary analysis to independently address the problem/issue/theory. <u>Establishes a connection</u> to the larger theoretical framework.	<u>Chooses appropriate</u> direct investigation, hands-on experience, theory application, or secondary analysis to independently address the problem/issue/theory. Does <u>not explain a connection</u> to larger theoretical framework.	<u>Chooses</u> direct investigation, hands-on experience, theory application, or secondary analysis to independently address the problem/issue/theory, but method is <u>not appropriate.</u> Does <u>not explain or connect</u> to larger theoretical framework.	No evidence of an appropriate direct investigation, experience, application, or secondary analysis to independently address the problem/issue/theory

	Capstone				Not Evident
Writing *Demonstrates effective presentation, coherence, organization, and academic standards in final documentation of the Advanced Project*	Logically organizes a clear, effective presentation of the final documentation of the Advanced Project according to the purpose and audience of the project. Consistently uses appropriate format and citation style and includes supporting materials (when necessary). Has <u>no obvious errors</u> (grammar, fluency).	Organizes with coherence and clarity; and appropriately presents final documentation of the Advanced Project for the purpose and audience. <u>Mostly demonstrates</u> appropriate academic standards (format, citation, supplements). Has <u>some minor errors</u> (grammar, fluency).	Organizes with coherence and clarity and presents final documentation of the Advanced Project for the appropriate purpose and audience. <u>Does not demonstrate</u> appropriate academic standards (format, citation, supplements). Has <u>several errors</u> (grammar, fluency).	Presents final documentation of the Advanced Project for the appropriate purpose and audience. Lacks organization, coherence, and clarity, <u>Does not use</u> appropriate academic standards (format, citation style, supplements). Has <u>many errors</u> which make understanding difficult.	Final documentation of the Advanced Project is incomplete and is not effectively presented for the purpose and audience.
Self-Assessment *Reflects on learning process and competence gained through completing Advanced Project*	<u>Evaluates</u> how the project achieved its intended purpose, how it was executed, and how it contributes to the field. <u>Appraises</u> the characteristics of the learning process and examines implications for future learning.	<u>Analyzes</u> how the project achieved its intended purpose, how it was executed, and how it contributes to the field. <u>Assesses</u> the learning process and relates to ideas for future.	<u>Describes</u> how the project achieved its intended purpose, how it was executed, and how it contributes to the field. <u>Summarizes</u> learning process and identifies ideas for future.	<u>Summarizes</u> how the project achieved its intended purpose, how it was executed, <u>or</u> how it contributes to the field. <u>Identifies</u> learning outcomes and/or plans.	No evidence of reflection on learning or plans for future learning.

Comments: