2019-2021 UK Core Alternative Assessment Report

The purpose of this report is to outline improvement efforts related to assessment of the UK Core during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic year. The institution did not conduct its traditional artifact-based approach of UK Core student learning outcomes during the 2019-20 academic year, stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. This decision was made in light of the additional burden placed on many faculty and staff to transition face-to-face courses to an online environment and the temporary hold placed on funding new assessment software needed to facilitate scoring of student work for the Core. Instead, 2019-20 was used by the UK Core Education Committee (UKCEC) of the Senate and the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (OSPIE) to examine, holistically, existing practices involving assessment of the Core and identify strategies for improvement. Although the artifact approach to learning outcomes assessment was re-initiated at the start of Fall 2020, this report extends through Summer 2021 due to the fact that many of the improvements identified during 2019-20 were not adopted until 2020-21.

Assignment Alignment with Rubrics

As noted above, the University uses an artifact-based approach to assessing the UK Core student learning outcomes. Each area and course within the UK Core is assessed over a four-year cycle using student artifacts (assignment submissions) provided by the course instructors and scored using standardized rubrics that are unique to each area of the Core. Each rubric contains multiple criteria that are scored individually by evaluators (analytic rubrics), which provides multiple data points for student achievement in each area of the Core.

One opportunity for improvement to UK Core assessment is the revision of the standardized rubrics to better align with the UK Core student learning outcomes and the course-embedded assignments to which the rubrics are applied. The need for revision and realignment was evidenced by the number of assignments that were collected but could not be scored during 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Across the 104 courses within the four areas of Intellectual Inquiry and the area of Quantitative Foundations that were scheduled to participate in assessment in 2016-17, there were 47 courses that submitted an assignment (45 percent). Of those 47 courses, 19 submitted assignments that were excluded (40 percent) due to missing instructions, incomplete student submissions, inaccessible file types, and/or insufficient alignment with the rubrics (see 2016-17 General Education Report). Those with missing instructions were excluded due to the difficulty it presented to evaluators who were often unable to determine whether the absence of desired characteristics in student work was attributable to poor alignment between the instructions and rubric or actual differences in student achievement.

The scoring approach was modified in 2017-18 in an attempt to utilize a larger portion of assignments; assignments lacking the original instructions were not automatically excluded. Instructions and student work that evaluators determined addressed at least half of the rubric criteria were retained for scoring. Additionally, a *N/A* option was added to the rubric rating scales, thereby allowing evaluators to indicate when an artifact did not provide sufficient evidence of the criterion to warrant a rating. Of the 807 artifacts scored for Composition and Communication, 194 (24 percent) contained a *N/A* rating for at least one criterion. A much larger portion of the Citizenship artifacts – 276 of 446 (62 percent) contained one or more criteria with a *N/A* rating, likely reflecting the fact that no Citizenship assignments were excluded by the evaluators prior to the evaluation process, although they were afforded the opportunity to do so.

A faculty-led ad-hoc committee, established at the request of the Provost and Senate Council Chair in 2017-18, examined numerous challenges related to the UK Core and assessment in particular (see Ad-hoc Committee for Assessment of Core proposal). Among the most pressing concerns identified by the committee were a) those pertaining to the limited participation in Core assessment by courses and instructors and b) alignment between the assignments that were provided and the scoring rubrics. One recommendation from the committee was to establish a process by which instructors would provide both the assignment and a completed form demonstrating how the assignment provides evidence of student achievement for the learning outcomes. This information would be reviewed periodically by the UKCEC or Provost's Office (OSPIE or another unit). The committee also suggested a need for greater training and awareness among instructors of how to interpret and apply the learning outcomes. These recommendations have not been acted upon.

Several important action steps were taken by the UKCEC in partnership with OSPIE during the 2020-21 academic year to improve the alignment of UK Core assignments and the standardized rubrics. Most of the standardized rubrics have undergone significant revision by subject-area faculty experts in order to clarify expectations for student work. Additionally, the scoring sensitivity of the rubrics was increased by expanding the rating scales from 3-point to 5-point scales. The revised rubrics for Composition & Communication and Citizenship were piloted with the Fall 2020 artifacts, and the rubrics for the other areas of the Core will be piloted with the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 artifacts. The only rubrics that have not been revised are the two rubrics for Quantitative Foundations.

Two other important changes were implemented to streamline the process of identifying and collecting UK Core course assignments that also have implications for alignment. In the past, instructors completed a Qualtrics form indicating the name of one or more assignments to be extracted from Canvas and were asked to provide a copy of the instructions. Often, the assignments could not be located by OSPIE or ITS staff in Canvas based upon the names provided, and instructors frequently did not provide the instructions when completing the Qualtrics survey. Beginning Fall 2020, instructors were asked to map one or more assignments to the learning outcomes directly in Canvas for the corresponding Core area(s), which has allowed OSPIE staff to extract the assignment instructions and student artifacts from Canvas for a larger number of courses and sections.

During the 2020-21 academic year, the UKCEC and OSPIE introduced earlier and more frequent communication to UK Core course instructors regarding Canvas mapping to raise awareness of expectations for participation in the assessment process. Moreover, mapping in Canvas requires instructors to map an assignment to the learning outcomes at the time when the assignment is created. Consequently, mapping in Canvas and enhanced communication are expected to improve alignment because they encourage instructors to be more proactive in identifying an assignment during the semester rather than providing information retrospectively at the end. This, in turn, should lead to more widespread participation, exclusion of fewer assignments, and assessment data that produce more reliable and valid conclusions regarding student achievement of the learning outcomes.

Available Evidence:

- 2017-2018 UK Core Assessment Report

- 2016-2017 UK Core Assessment Report
- 2018 Ad Hoc Committee Report

Increasing UK Core Participation Rates

The expectation for participation in UK Core assessment is that all sections of each approved course are to contribute at least one assignment, when requested as part of the four-year cycle, that aligns with the UK Core outcomes and rubric for that area. Although 100 percent participation is the goal, actual course participation rates ranged from 32 to 71 percent in 2016-17 and 2017-18, depending upon the Core area. Moreover, not all assignments provided have proved usable; the percentage of courses providing usable assignments has ranged from 17 to 43 percent in those same years (see 2016-17 and 2017-18 UK Core Assessment Reports).

Several strategies have been adopted to increase the total number of courses and sections contributing assignments as part of UK Core assessment and to encourage the submission of artifacts that are more suitable for scoring based on the outcomes and rubrics. First, the process of communicating with college-level administrators has been enhanced. Starting with Fall 2020, communication regarding the UK Core assessment process and expectations has been provided by the UKCEC chair and OSPIE. It is expected that college administrators and Core instructors will have greater familiarity and be more open to receiving guidance from the UKCEC and senior leadership in the Provost's Office, and therefore more likely to comply with the request to participate in assessment. Communication regarding UK Core assessment participation has also occurred on a more frequent basis than in past years.

Second, the process for faculty to identify and communicate to the UKCEC and OSPIE the name of the assignment(s) from their courses that are to be used in Core assessment has been transitioned from a Qualtrics survey to the outcomes mapping feature within Canvas. This step eliminates the potential for disagreement in the faculty-reported name of the assignment(s) and the actual name of the assignment(s) in Canvas. Furthermore, it locates the process of identifying assignments for UK Core within the same system where the assignments are housed in most cases. Finally, asking faculty to proactively map their assignments to the Core outcomes prior to the creation of the assignments in Canvas may encourage more careful selection and even development of the assignments than when they are selected retrospectively in Qualtrics.

As a result of these efforts, the participation of courses and sections in UK Core assessment in Fall 2020 was 32 and 29 percent for Community, Culture, and Citizenship; 31 and 21 percent for Global Dynamics; 100 and 70 percent for Composition and Communication I; and 100 and 76 percent for Composition and Communication II.

Available Evidence:

- Fall 2020 UK Core Assessment Report
- 2017-2018 UK Core Assessment Report
- 2016-2017 UK Core Assessment Report

Returning Data to Campus Constituents

A key area in which the UKCEC and OSPIE are looking to guide improvements to Core assessment is the sharing of data with campus constituents. Historically, only aggregate data from the assessment of student learning outcomes were reported, in part due to the sampling procedure specified in the assessment plan. Data could not be provided at the course or department level for the UKCEC or the departments to review and act upon. Sharing data back to the faculty responsible for teaching the courses is a best practice and understood to be one of the primary means of facilitating improvements to the Core.

In an effort to mitigate past sampling limitations, the UKCEC and OSPIE collaborated to develop and implement new sampling procedures for 2020-21 student artifacts. This sampling approach focuses on sampling at the course level, as this is the level of interest for data reporting and instructional intervention. Overall, 20 artifacts, or groups of artifacts in the case of multi-file assignments, were sampled from each course for the two areas of Citizenship, drawn from across sections if multiple sections were taught. Due to the small number of courses and the large number of sections approved for Composition & Communication (C&C), 50 artifacts, or groups of artifacts, were sampled from each course, drawn randomly from across sections.

The change in sampling allowed for the development and dissemination of the first ever UK Core departmental assessment reports for the Fall 2020 results. These reports provide information on student achievement, at the rubric criterion level, within each course that participated in the assessment process for a given department. The reports also provide a comparison of student performance in each course to the overall achievement of students for the given Core area. At the end of the reports, a series of observations regarding the data and a list of questions the faculty are encouraged to further explore have been included. Additionally, implementation of the new assessment management system, AEFIS, is expected to increase the efficiency and sustainability of the learning outcomes assessment process for Core, thereby allowing OSPIE to provide departmental reports in a timely manner in future semesters.

A number of other data sources that provide indirect evidence of student achievement and effectiveness of the Core are available but have not been examined by the UKCEC for a number of years, or in some cases at all. These include select items from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Graduating Senior Survey (GSS), and teacher course evaluations (TCEs). The NSSE and the GSS contain information about students' perceived achievement of general education competencies, broadly defined. NSSE and GSS data have not been shared with the UKCEC but will be reviewed by the committee moving forward. While NSSE and GSS do not provide insight to Core at the department or course level, these data can help provide insight to the UKCEC regarding students' overall experiences with the Core and their undergraduate experience.

The TCEs contain a series of questions asking students about the extent to which a given Core course helped them achieve the learning outcomes as well as the quality of instruction. Typically, TCEs are returned to instructors at the course section level, but aggregate data for Core courses have not been shared with the UKCEC in a number of years due to reporting challenges associated with eXplorance Blue, the platform used to conduct the TCEs. However, a future opportunity for OSPIE and the UKCEC is to utilize AEFIS, the new assessment management system, to create aggregate TCE reports at the departmental or Core area levels to gain further insight into the student perspective of the Core.

Available Evidence:

- UKCEC Listening Tour feedback
- Tables from past years showing sampling limitations.
- NSSE/GSS/TCE
- UK Core Assessment Departmental Reports

Reporting Improvement of UK Core Courses

The UK Core learning outcomes assessment process has historically satisfied the requirements laid forth in the 2012 SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation that articulated a need to identify and assess the extent to which students had met the "general education competencies." While changes and improvements to student learning have occurred related to the Core, a formal process has yet to be established to encourage the use of outcomes data for improvement or to document these changes. These steps are essential for compliance with the 2018 SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation that require the institution to provide "evidence of seeking improvement based on the analysis of the results."

Discussions have occurred over the past several years among the UKCEC, the ad-hoc committee convened in 2017-18, and other key stakeholders centering on improving the assessment process and opportunities for consistently closing the assessment loop. Preliminary ideas discussed have included:

A. Scoring fall and spring courses separately in order to provide data to the UKCEC more frequently

B. Sharing course-level learning outcomes data to the academic departments responsible for delivering those courses

C. Providing regular faculty development opportunities related to the Core, including course and assignment design, led by CELT

D. Conducting an annual retreat with the academic departments whose courses participated in assessment the prior year to discuss and document actions taken based on the data

E. Implementation of a reporting process to document changes made at the department level similar to the process for degree and certificate learning outcomes assessment

The first two items listed above were piloted during the 20-21 academic year. Initial support for the third item has been received from CELT staff and the UKCEC; the structure, timing, and communication of the faculty development opportunities will be explored in the future with an intended launch during 21-22. A model for obtaining information on closing the assessment loop at the department level is expected to be identified and piloted in Fall 2021 by the UKCEC, in partnership with OSPIE. The success of the pilot will determine adjustments to the model or the need for an alternative in future semesters.

Available Evidence:

- Fall 2020 UK Core Assessment Report

- Fall 2020 UK Core Assessment Departmental Reports
- Draft of UK Core closing the loop departmental form

Organizational Identity and Lines of Authority & Responsibility

In February 2019, then-Senate Council Chair Jennifer Bird-Pollan appointed Patrick Lee Lucas as Chair of the UK Core Education Committee. After a few months gap in meetings during 2019-2020, the Committee began meeting in earnest in April and, during a retreat in May, outlined a two-year process for listening and action. The 2019-2020 school year opened with members of the UKCEC hosting a series of listening sessions to discern what understandings and perceptions of the UK Core existed among student, faculty, staff, alumni, and industry leader groups as well as with governing bodies (Senate Council, Undergraduate Council) and administrative groups (Associate Deans working group, Provost's Council on Advising, etc.) on campus. The results of that series of listening sessions were included in the UK Core Annual Report disseminated to the campus in August 2020.

From the listening sessions, UKCEC members learned that faculty, staff, students, and administrators on campus and many other individuals off campus understood the purpose and the realities of the UK Core in a variety of ways. Moreover, UKCEC members learned that communications about UK Core were largely ineffective for student, faculty, staff, and administrative groups, especially in the absence of an administrative office that resulted from the merger of Undergraduate Education and Student Affairs to form Student and Academic Life (now Student Success).

To begin countering these communications issues, the UKCEC worked with Dr. Beth Barnes (Integrated Strategic Communication, College of Communications and Information) who led students in a course to examine the UK Core with various stakeholders. They made a series of recommendations at the end of the Fall Semester 2020 and Dr. Barnes met with the UKCEC in Spring 2021 to outline a targeted approach to begin addressing some of the shortcomings in communications for the UK Core, including lack of consistent messaging to various constituents and a lack of understanding about the impacts of the UK Core on undergraduate education.

During the COVID-19 pandemic from Spring 2020 through Fall 2020, the UKCEC continued to meet online and moved forward initiatives to address not only the pandemic but the protests about race and equity that unfolded over the summer. The UKCEC took action to request the Senate Council appoint a diversity, equity, and inclusion expert to the committee and in February 2021, the Senate Council Chair appointed a representative from the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.

The Senate Office updated the website for the UK Core though much of the content there only reflects the very early explanations of the rollout of UK Core in 2012.

During 2020-2021, the area experts in Composition & Communication and Citizenship worked with partners in OSPIE to revise rubrics to be used for assessment of student artifacts from Fall 2020 courses in those areas. OSPIE created an online orientation for evaluators and the area experts have been involved in the training of evaluators to facilitate assessment. During the

revision of rubrics, area experts in Composition & Communication were able to improve coordination of instructor efforts from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Communication and Information who share the responsibility of teaching in this area of UK Core. The area experts in Citizenship engaged with the chairs/DUSs and instructors regarding assessment in the courses across both areas in the UK Core. As a result of all these conversations, the UKCEC endorsed a more streamlined assessment process facilitated by OSPIE that involved mapping of assignments in Canvas, course-level sampling, and scoring and reporting of data in both fall and spring. This approach provides a timelier return of assessment results to impacted colleges, departments, and instructors, as well as offering the opportunity for the UKCEC to view the UK Core assessment data for program-wide improvement.

Available Evidence:

- UKCEC Listening Tour feedback from administration, faculty, and students.
- Report from Dr. Beth Barnes' class report

UK Core Work Group

This report was prepared by the UK Core Work Group between April and August 2021. Membership included:

Patrick Lee Lucas, Associate Professor, School of Interiors, Chair of UKCEC 2019-21

Kaitlyn Mathews, Administrative Support Specialist, OSPIE

RaeAnne Pearson, Planning and Accreditation Coordinator, OSPIE

Mike Rudolph, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, OSPIE

Chris Thuringer, Interim Director of Institutional Research, OSPIE

Katherine McCormick, Professor Interdisciplinary Childhood Education, Acting Associate Provost for Planning and Assessment, OSPIE

Mark Cruse, Business Data Analyst, OSPIE

Mike Wallace, Faculty Instructional Consultant, CELT

Trey Conatser, Associate Director, CELT

Jill Abney, Associate Director of PresentationU, CELT

Annie W