

## **2015-16 UF 200 ETHICS AND DIVERSITY/INTERNATIONALIZATION ASSESSMENT**

### **UNIVERSITY LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT AT BOISE STATE**

Boise State is committed to assuring that all graduating students, regardless of major, achieve 11 signature University Learning Outcomes (ULOs). Boise State's ULO standards capture our general education goals, spelling out the knowledge, skills, and mindsets that employers and graduate programs are seeking in areas like Critical Inquiry (ULO 3), Teamwork (ULO 4), and Ethics (ULO 5).

To support our learning goals, Boise State is implementing a ULO assessment plan designed to help faculty take stock of student competencies and make informed decisions about curriculum alignment, course design, and pedagogy. Boise State's ULO assessment plan outlines a faculty-driven, four-year cycle designed to support continuous improvement. The ULO assessment cycle begins with collecting evidence and initial recommendations for change (Phase One). Next, faculty discuss their Phase One insights and roll out plans for change (Phase 2), review progress and support faculty/staff development (Phase 3), and develop processes for maintenance and revision (Phase 4).

### **ETHICAL REASONING AND DIVERSITY IN UF 200**

Civic and Ethical Foundations 200 (UF 200) is a required, cross-disciplinary course taken by all students at Boise State. UF 200 Students engage in thought-provoking examinations of ethical issues, consider what it means to be an engaged citizen, and participate in community-oriented civic engagement projects outside the classroom.

UF 200 is designed around 3 of our 11 university learning outcomes: Writing (ULO 1), Ethics (ULO 5), and Diversity/Internationalization (ULO 6). During the 2015-16 academic year, UF 200 faculty began Phase One assessment of the Ethics and Diversity/Internationalization ULOs, focusing on Ethics subcategory 5.3 (Ethical Reasoning) and Diversity/Internationalization subcategories 6.3 (Identification of Issues) and 6.4 (Application of Issues).

#### **Assessment Criteria**

Ethics ULO 5.3: Ethical Reasoning

Diversity ULO 6.3: Identification of Issues

Diversity ULO 6.4: Application of Issues

The assessment criteria in each of these areas was established by an interdisciplinary team of Boise State faculty in 2011 who based their work upon American Association of Colleges (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics. In the future, our VALUE-based rubrics will help us compare our students' development against that of other students on a national level.

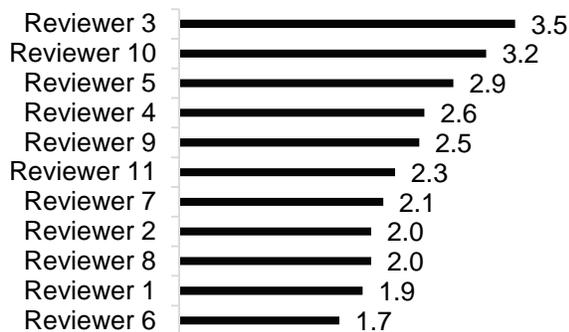
A copy of the ULO rubric used by faculty during this Phase One assessment is attached to this report as Appendix A. For further information about Boise State's University Learning Outcomes or the design and delivery of UF 200, please visit the following website: <https://academics.boisestate.edu/fsp>.

## HOW WE SAMPLED AND SCORED STUDENT WORK

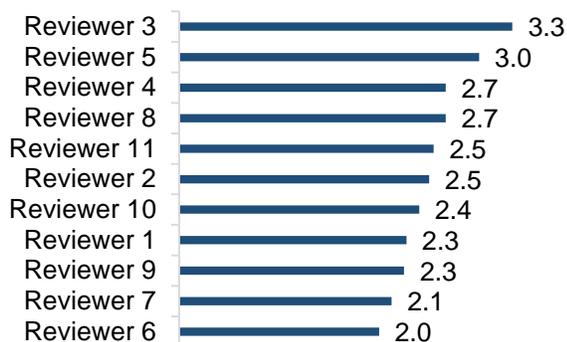
For this assessment, 11 faculty reviewers looked at 111 distinct samples students uploaded to their e-portfolios during the Spring 2016 semester. The 111 students who created our samples represented about 10% of the total UF 200 enrollment of 1,129 students in Spring 2016.

Ninety-five of the student artifacts we assessed were written essays, but a few slide presentations were also included. The samples were rated on a 1-4 scale as “unsatisfactory” (1) “developing” (2) “good” (3) or “exemplary” (4).

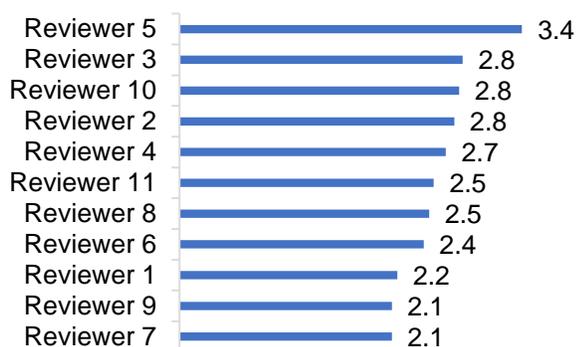
### Avg - Ethical Reasoning



### Avg - Diversity, Identification of Issues



### Avg - Diversity, Application of Issues



## Norming

Before student artifacts were scored, our reviewers participated in a norming session, during which they looked at two sample papers together and discussed the rubric criteria.

During our norming session, the rubric standards for Ethical Reasoning were a central topic. The Ethical Reasoning standards ask reviewers to assess two different skills: (a) students’ ability to “apply prominent theories/principles to ethical issues” and (b) students’ ability to “articulate potential objections to one’s own ethical reasoning.”

Much of our discussion centered around what constituted “prominent theory/principles” for UF 200 courses and how reviewers should determine if a student was reasoning using those ethical principles. The reviewers moved forward into Phase One scoring with the understanding that further discussion about this language was needed, as noted in the Conclusion section of this report.

The charts on this page show the average scores given by each of our 11 reviewers.

The overall average student score for all three assessed criteria was about 2.4, and average scores were relatively similar in all three categories. The average scores for 8 of the 11 reviewers fell within a one-point range for all three criteria.

## SUMMARY OF NUMERICAL SCORES

It should be noted that, at Boise State, our rubrics were written to assess student development across the entire length of an undergraduate career. The knowledge and skills needed to attain a score of “4” (exemplary) reflect what we would like **graduating seniors** to achieve. Therefore, a “2” (developing) is reasonable for students in a sophomore-level class like UF 200.

### Overall Results

As previously noted, the overall average student score for all three assessed criteria was about 2.4. Students who achieved a 2.4 were able to apply ethical principles or theories, showed some understanding of potential objections to their ethical arguments, demonstrated some understanding of issues arising from the intersection of diverse group frameworks, and could sometimes apply cultural self-awareness to group frameworks.

In other words, students whose work was rated “developing” demonstrated an ability to perform basic skills within the Ethics and Diversity categories, but they did not display those skills as deeply and consistently as students should by the time they from graduate college.

### Distribution of Scores

The following graph shows the distribution of average overall scores on assessable samples across our rubric’s rating scale, from “unsatisfactory” (1) to “exemplary” (4):

Distribution of Average Overall Scores

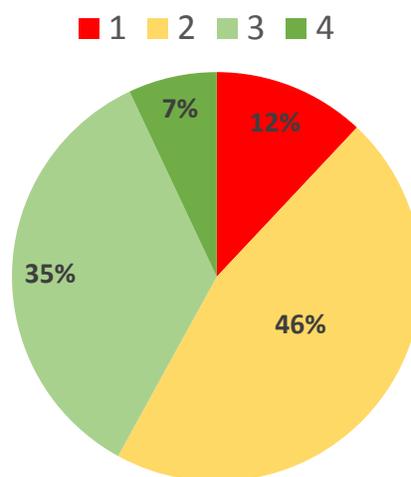


Figure 2: Distribution of average overall student rubric scores

**Exemplary:** 7% of samples received a “4” in all three assessment areas.

**Good:** 35% received an average overall score in the “3” range (3.0-3.9).

**Developing:** 46% received an average overall score in the “2” range (2.0-2.9).

**Unsatisfactory:** 12% received an average overall score in the “1” range (1.0-1.9).

### Where Students Struggled

Among students who scores were low, the number of “1” scores were similar across all three assessment categories. Students who struggled seemed to have a hard time in all three areas.

However, the chart below also displays the number of times reviewers marked student work as NA, “Not Assessable,” in each category—leaving a sample unscored on a learning outcome. (Reviewers marked work unassessable when they felt that a sample did not provide enough evidence to judge the student’s level of ability.)

Underperforming students received NA marks about twice as often in the Ethical Reasoning category. This may mean that the uploaded assignments prompted students to display their Ethical Reasoning skills less often or less clearly than they prompted students to display their Diversity skills.

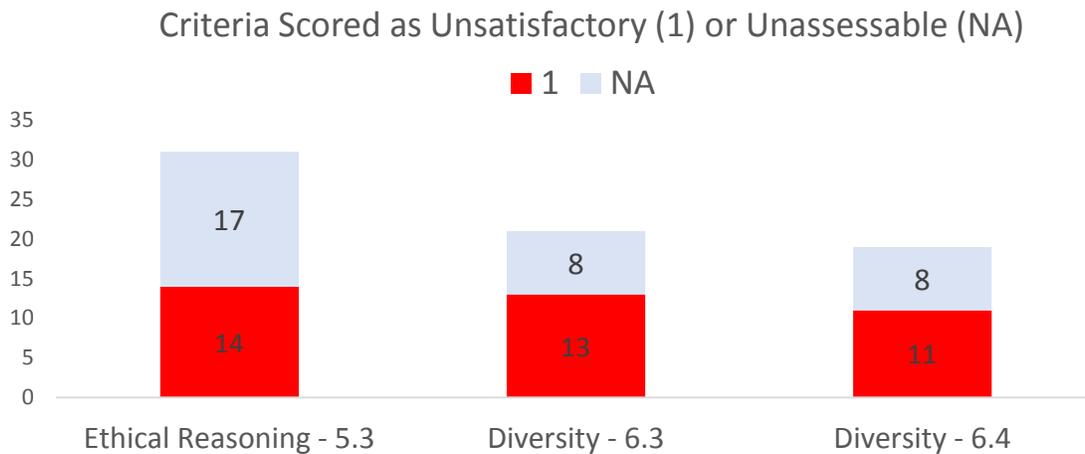


Figure 3: Number of Unsatisfactory (1) and Not Assessable (NA) scores

### Where Students Excelled

We also isolated the scores of high-scoring students for examination. The UF 200 students who displayed the greatest mastery of the ULO skills did not score entirely equally across all categories. Instead, they received somewhat higher scores on Diversity/Internationalization than on Ethical Reasoning. Scores of “3” or “4,” for Good or Exemplary work, were awarded on each of the criteria as indicated below:

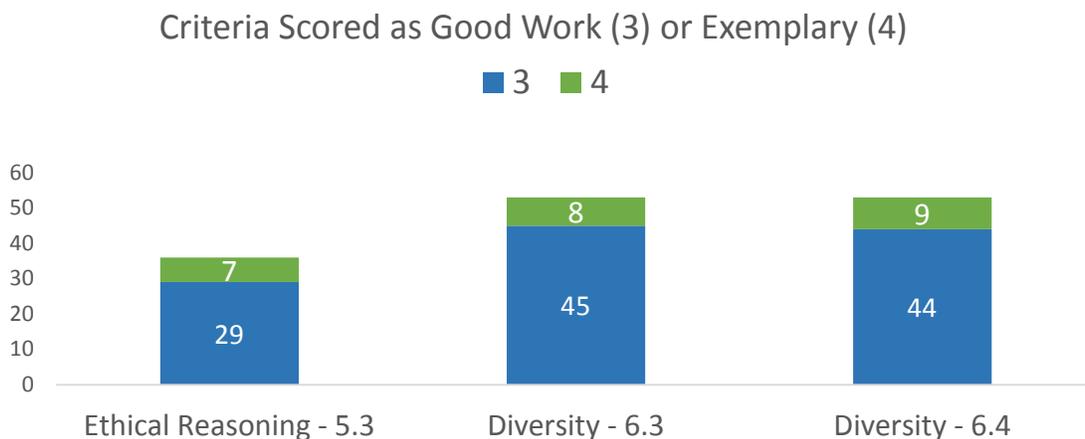


Figure 4: Number of Good Work (3) or Exemplary (4) scores

## CONCLUSION

Our results suggest that UF 200 faculty may want to focus their Phase Two improvement plans on the Ethical Reasoning learning outcome. The discussion which took place among our reviewers after their initial scoring session centered around many of the same observations UF 200 instructors had previously made about Ethical Reasoning in their Faculty Learning Communities over the course of the 2015-16 academic year.

Observations made by our reviewers and by our larger UF 200 faculty group included the following:

- It is a challenge for students to analyze ethical dilemmas outside their own perspective even when they are able to define and articulate various ethical frameworks.
- The language of the Ethical Reasoning ULO standards may be unclear to some faculty and students. Further work may be needed to meaningfully translate the Ethical Reasoning standards into the UF 200 context.
- Students generally had some proficiency with Diversity/Internationalization prior to entering UF 200, and this may correlate to slightly higher achievement on this ULO.
- Diversity/Internationalization content and assignments have sometimes been more fully integrated throughout the semester than Ethics assignments, giving students more practice with these ideas.
- To ensure greater levels of student achievement instructors may need to more carefully scaffold Ethical Reasoning assignments as well as integrate ethical analysis throughout the semester.
- Some faculty suggested incorporating more explicit expectations for student articulation of Ethical Reasoning in the common Global Solutions project, while others suggested that instructors might need to have a separate assignment assessing students' achievement levels in Ethical Reasoning, because the Global Solutions project is not the best artifact for revealing that skill.
- Faculty also discussed ways to more meaningful and accurately capture students' Ethical Reasoning abilities. Many Ethical Reasoning course assignments and exercises are focused on discussion or other in-class activities, which are difficult to capture and measure.

UF 200 faculty will receive an update about the results of this report at the beginning of the Fall 2016 semester. Over the course of the 2016–17 academic year, UF 200 faculty will then determine relevant and achievable action items for the following academic year.