

## SECTION FOUR

### Educational Quality:

# Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation

Subsections include:

- Core Competency & Programmatic Assessment Indicators (Undergraduate)
- Core Competency & Programmatic Assessment Indicators (Graduate)
- Assessing Diversity (ILO)—Online & Face-to-Face Surveys
- Assessing Writing Intensive (System Graduation Requirement)
- Distance Learning Assessment
- Going Forward—Sustaining Assessment in the Era of COVID

*Kona, ke kai malino a Ehu.*

Kona, land of the calm sea of Ehu

--'Ōlelo no'eau referring to the Chief Ehunuikaimalino, who was famous for building roads for his people, the most famous running in the uplands of Kona all the way to the South to Ka'ū.

In the 2008 Special Visit, we were asked to “continue to make every effort to educate the campus on the value and purpose of assessment aside from compliance.”<sup>1</sup> Whereas the 2014 Site Team found that “UH Hilo had invested significant institutional resources in efforts aimed at creating a culture of assessment on campus. In addition to hiring experts to conduct on-site workshops, it has sponsored faculty participation in national and regional conferences and workshops where they receive training in outcome assessment.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the Substantive Change Committee just two years later strongly stated “The institution should strengthen its assessment framework with a clear, detailed and systematic institutional data collection plan including direct and indirect measures of student learning.”<sup>3</sup> It was clear that simply sending department chairs and deans to workshops did not accomplish expanding the culture of assessment. Instead, we decided to adopt a one-on-one mentorship approach that is sensible and flexible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Michael Ortiz et al., [Report of the WASC Visiting Team Special Visit Review](#), March 18-20, 2008, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Leroy Morishita et al., [Report of the WSCUC Team](#), Pilot 2, October 22-24, 2014, 10-11. Note: In AY 2008-2009, UH Hilo reported \$118,000 in WSCUC workshop fees, see Paragraph 4 under “[Ensuring Quality and Rigor](#),” Essay One: Defining the Meaning of the Degree and Ensuring Integrity, Quality, and Rigor, UH Hilo 2013-2014 Institutional Review for Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

<sup>3</sup> Substantive Change Action Report for the Masters in Heritage Management, June 29, 2015, 2.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on sustainable assessment practices, see Linda Suskie, “[Making assessment worthwhile](#),” *A Common Sense Approach to Assessment in Higher Education*, March 13, 2018, accessed June 16, 2020.

The first step was to simplify the myriad of SLOs that can often bog down efforts at starting. As reported in our Mid-Cycle Review (May 2019), our Institutional Learning Outcomes are directly tied to the Core Competencies. Back in 2013, the WSCUC redesign of accreditation called for all universities to ensure “Core Competencies”—at that time, UH Hilo decided to tie these directly to our general education curriculum that includes a large number of upper division (third- and fourth-year) courses in many majors. SLOs for GE were then adopted as ILOs.<sup>5</sup> In hindsight, this simplification has also helped us to better serve our legislative mandate to provide educational opportunities on par with mainland colleges (as we stated in the Introduction). (CRF 2.3)

The ALO, who completed the ALA (Cohort I), began chairing the Assessment Support Committee in AY 2012-2013, which in turn led to key individuals becoming familiar with core competency assessment. Key faculty from academic programs and from the Library were recruited to directly facilitate and later chair Information Literacy, Written Communication, Oral Communication, and Quantitative Reasoning assessments. One of those chairs has gone on to help steer the Graduate Council to start yearly assessments among graduate programs. These ongoing efforts have resulted in six years of data, with two years for Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Quantitative Reasoning, making comparisons possible (these will be undertaken further below in this essay). The committee is populated by ten members representing four colleges—these individuals have developed recurring, one-on-one mentoring partnerships with other faculty and serve as second readers in direct assessment of student artifacts to provide “external” validation of scoring. That data is publicly posted to show how our students are meeting the expectations we set for them. (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, & 4.4)

To bolster the importance of assessment on campus, the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs assigned personnel to directly manage websites that houses Core Competency and Programmatic Assessment Indicators for both the [undergraduate](#) and the [graduate](#) levels, with yearly data posted for each skill and [disaggregation of data by departments](#) (undergraduate programs only) for use in program review. (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, & 4.4) We also developed key descriptors for each skill to better articulate to non-faculty and external constituents the importance of such skills; moreover, we linked these skills to the U.S. Department of Education’s mandate which requires universities to ensure “baseline levels of acceptable quality and performance” in order to participate in the distribution of federal student aid. (CFR 2.3)

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<sup>5</sup> Donald O. Straney to Michael Shintaku, Motion to Adopt Institutional Learning Outcomes, June 4, 2013, <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/policies/documents/policies/CongressMotiontoAdoptInstitutionalLearningOutcomes6.4.13.pdf>.

### *Core Competency & Programmatic Assessment Indicators (Undergraduate)*

The following are our undergraduate core competency assessments as they are publicly communicated on our website (note that hyperlinks in the skills redirect to the assessment rubrics):

#### *Critical Thinking*

Critical thinking is about analysis, decision-making, planning, and the synthesis of information and evidence into one's own work that results in a unique, insightful, and purposeful "product"—whether that be a scholarly paper, an artistic composition, a field experiment, or a lab report. (This is a skill that is embedded in the rubrics for the other four core competencies—Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Oral Communication, and Information Literacy.)

#### [Written Communication](#)

The ability to logically construct a line of reasoning in well-organized and eloquent prose that effectively communicates information, makes a convincing argument, and/or expresses important viewpoints to an intended audience is a marketable skill in the professional world.

- [Data for AY 2013-2014](#)
- [Data for AY 2017-2018](#)

#### [Quantitative Reasoning](#)

Students may not need to master advanced algorithms, but all individuals need to understand numbers and what they mean (and don't mean). Often, poor arguments are based on haphazard or misuse of data and statistics—completing a college degree ensures students will have the ability to identify & solve problems from a quantitative perspective through the critical collection and scrutiny of data and how to best visually produce data in ways that are effective.

- [Data for AY 2014-2015](#)
- [Data for AY 2018-2019](#)

#### [Oral Communication](#)

Oral Communication refers to verbal/oral eloquence (spoken language). Students should be able to choose appropriate language for any given audience (professional or casual), and deliver a message or main points through an organized and engaging speech or presentation that may *employ visual aids, body language, and other non-verbal elements that enhance the meaning or argument* put forth.

- [Data for AY 2016-2017](#)

### [Information Literacy](#)

College-level writing often stresses proper citation formatting in terms of bibliographies and cited material. However, Information Literacy is also about learning to avoid plagiarism (whether intentional or unintentional) as well as locating and utilizing credible sources of information as opposed to just taking anything from the internet as “fact.” Universities try to instill in students an ability to question and to reject information or arguments that are clearly inaccurate or false.

- [Data for AY 2015-2016](#)
- Data for AY 2020-2021 (in progress)

Having undertaken annual core competency assessments since AY 2012-2013, we now have two sets of data on undergraduate attainment of these skills. (CFRs 2.2a & 4.1) The analysis of these were submitted as a statement on core competencies for the [Compliance Audit Checklist](#).

On a programmatic level, scores are sent back to the department with a request for feedback from the faculty member. Oftentimes, this is where the faculty will report plans on “closing the loop” as needed. For example, \_\_\_ submitted papers from POLS 322 for Written Communication and made the following comments regarding where improvements in the program was needed: “The scores for POLS 322 fall below the scores for the POLS 470S Capstone Seminar, but this may be expected as POLS 470S is a higher-level class taken in the student’s last or penultimate semester. This underscores the importance of establishing an AJ Capstone seminar for the purpose of assessment.” In the case of [Philosophy](#), where the results showed strong writing, the department reported, “We plan on continuing our efforts towards developing assignments that meet these learning outcomes: line of reasoning, organization and structure, content and language /prose/syntax.” These reports are uploaded to a site where [results are posted by department](#) which are encouraged to review them, especially as they start preparations for program review. While departments are cautioned that these alone may not be enough to ensure the quality of the degree, this annual assessment is becoming established as a regular practice on campus. (CFR 2.2a, 2.3, 2.4, & 4.1)

### *Core Competency & Programmatic Assessment Indicators (Graduate)*

Given the importance of core competency skills for the undergraduate level and the recommendations of previous substantive change committees to develop more comprehensive assessment at the graduate level, the following skills and descriptors were developed by the Graduate Council and are posted on our accreditation website:

### [Written Communication](#)

Graduate students demonstrate the ability to construct a coherent and convincing argument in support of original insights into the content. Writing is well organized and appropriate for the intended audience and can include highly specialized language.

- [Data for AY 2017-2018](#)

### [Quantitative Reasoning](#)

Graduate students exhibit the ability to design a rational method of inquiry, and collect, analyze and interpret data. Graduate students are able to use and justify the appropriate mathematical or statistical methods appropriate to addressing a topic of inquiry or issue in a primary field. Graduate students demonstrate the ability to reformulate and adapt principal ideas, techniques or methods at the forefront of the field.

- [Data for AY 2018-2019](#)

### [Information Literacy](#)

Graduate students demonstrate the ability to use relevant, appropriate and credible sources. Graduate students are able to examine and adequately synthesize information. Graduate-level writing internalizes proper citation formatting in bibliographies and cited material, in line with discipline specific style guides.

- [Data for AY 2019-2020](#)

### [Oral Communication](#)

Graduate students demonstrate the ability to use appropriate language and effective delivery techniques and processes. They have the ability to organize in a logical sequence, and structure the content of their message in a concise and engaging manner.

- Data collection set for AY 2020-2021

Generally speaking, data from these assessments reflect graduate students' satisfactory attainment of these core skills at the post-baccalaureate level; however, as graduate level assessment is relatively early in its development, more time is needed before we have enough data to run multi-year comparisons for efficacy. (CFRs 2.2b, 2.6, & 2.7)

## *Assessing Diversity (ILO)—Online & Face-to-Face Surveys*

As far back as 1984, UH Hilo has been commended by WSCUC for its “outstanding efforts to serve the wide range of students which [our] unique location makes possible”; however, from that time, we ourselves have been cognizant that “‘We haven’t taken full advantage of the diversity we already have.’ The accreditation team concurs with this observation.”<sup>6</sup> Our review of recent NSSE data suggests that UH Hilo seniors interacted with diversity at a rate equal to or greater than peers at other Far West Public institutions (See [Section Five: Student Success](#), page 9).

Part of the problem is the conflation of diversity in terms of simple faculty and student numbers versus diversity in study and curriculum—whether it be at the microcosmic level of which authors are or are not included in a survey of literature course or, on a larger scale, what specific disciplines or specialized schools of focus may or may not be offered (i.e. foreign languages, indigenous-centered degrees, etc.). Compounding this is the problem of assessment—just because a person comes into contact with a wide range of peoples/cultures/lifestyles or even if one engages in texts and subjects from a diverse range of beliefs, regions, and political persuasions doesn’t mean s/he “learns” from the encounter. Part of the problem may lie in the nebulous purpose of diversity—exactly what do we expect the encounter to do for our students, for us as teachers and staff, for our larger institution, and for our community?

We actually anticipated assessing diversity back in AY 2008-2009 when the members of the Assessment Committee, under the guidance of Amy Driscoll, developed a rubric which was built using the Big Island myth of Nī’aeupo’o, a youth whose travels and travails were deemed a proper metaphor for the experience of students at our institution. We also contemplated the cultural values we hold dear and how these values could be communicated. The following four areas were identified per input from students in past freshman writing classes:

- Sense of Place (engagement with Hawai‘i’s uniqueness as a home of indigenous people, immigrants, and immigrant descendants);
- *Kākou* (a Hawaiian term that means “we” that expresses an inclusive sense of humanity);
- *‘Oukou/Lākou* (pronouns that refer to “They” and the plural “You” that cannot be used without an understanding of others);
- *Au/Mākou* (“I” or “We” which is exclusive and refers to Sense of Self).

All four are seen as the cornerstone of local social communication and were thus embedded in a rubric that was meant to be used in evaluating student writing. However, initial use in AY 2009-2010 was problematic because the rubric was experimentally used to evaluate student work in two upper division classes—one in English and one in Education; students reported mixed sentiments on the efficacy of the

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene H. Cota-Robles et al., Team Report of the WASC Visiting Team, April 13-14, 1989, 9-10.

rubric. We thus quickly turned to Information Literacy, Written and Oral Communication, and Quantitative Reasoning. But the recent difficulties arising over the Thirty Millimeter Telescope (TMT) since 2019 showed us we needed to return to our goal of assessing diversity.<sup>7</sup>

With this and past difficulties with our rubric in mind, we decided to approach diversity through indirect assessment; we opted for an [online](#) and a [face-to-face survey](#) based on the principles in the [rubric](#). As the assessment committee predicted, directly asking students to evaluate how well we as an institution were in “teaching” and “fostering” diversity gave us a better understanding of: (1) our Hawaii—Pan Pacific and GCC courses; (2) diversity as a component of an academic major; and (3) student support programs and their relation to learning on campus. (CFR 2.5 & 4.1)

### *Results of the Online Survey*

The Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity (who was also Co-Chair of Assessment in AY 2019-2020) undertook an analysis of the data, and below is an excerpt of the full report:

Of the 70 students who responded, 54 identified as female, 15 as male and 1 as gender non-binary/queer. The majority of respondents fell into the “typical” age of undergraduate students, with 60% ( $n = 42$ ) falling between 17 and 22 years. The age of respondents ranged as high as 83, with the most respondents in their 20s, but including at least two respondents each in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s respectively. More than 15% identified as having a disability ( $n = 11$ ). Race/ethnicity drew a mix of responses. White students represent almost a third of the student respondents ( $n = 22$ ). An equal number of respondents indicate they identify as racially/ethnically diverse, checking more than one race/ethnicity ( $n = 22$ ); among these students 7 also identified as Native Hawaiian. Graduate and undergraduate students from every college were represented. Representation is split almost evenly among students by the standard year based on credit hours achieved (i.e. 0-30 credits, first year). Interestingly, however, 11 students stated they have more than 120 credits, indicating they have more credits than are required to graduate.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that prior to coming to UH Hilo they were somewhat, moderately, or completely aware of Hawai‘i’s uniqueness as a state ( $n = 64$ ), its history of immigration and immigrant descendants ( $n = 61$ ), the history of being an independent kingdom prior to annexation ( $n = 59$ ), and as a geographical and environmentally unique biosphere ( $n = 63$ ). Of those students who indicated no awareness, in every category, all but one

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the recent charges of racism associated with the TMT, please see Chavonnie Ramos’ [“Activity group Mauna Kea Protectors at UH demand university officials take action on reported claims of racist attacks,”](#) *Ka Leo*, September 18, 2019 (updates March 6, 2020).

student selected “Mainland US” or “Outside the US” as the setting in which they grew up. These findings are encouraging in the sense that students are generally aware that the experiences they gain at UH Hilo based on its geography, people, and history may be very different from those they experience elsewhere. However, there is also a clear opportunity to connect with students who have no pre-existing experience or even knowledge about Hawai’i Island, which is the first hallmark on our Diversity rubric

Considering the findings when examining sense of self and place prior to coming to UH Hilo, and the suggestion that courses should be one means to educate, raise awareness, and encourage critical analysis internal and external to self, we queried students regarding courses they have taken. We wanted to know whether or not students are receiving this education, and if so, whether in their general education courses, electives, or courses in their major. Students responded affirmatively that they do obtain this type of content within the classroom, and in all types of courses. **But, while many students indicated more than one type of course aided them on their journey, courses within their major lead as the class type where students gain their diversity training in the classroom. That said, a somewhat alarming finding came from student responses in a total of ten questions (out of 36) where “none” was the most frequently occurring response, indicating that these students did not believe they were receiving this information in or out of the classroom.** These responses clearly indicate a need to emphasize and promote the diversity rubric and train faculty in its implementation.

Survey responses also indicate that more than 10% of students did not have a history of seeking opportunities to learn about differences prior to enrolling in one of the most diverse campuses in the United States. Another 13% did not feel a sense of pride in their own identity and almost 20% did not feel comfortable being their true self in most settings. UH Hilo student respondents believe their institution to be a safe, inclusive place for people from all walks of life to live and learn ( $n = 60$ ), and they also agree that their overall experience at UH Hilo helped them grow as a person ( $n = 62$ ). However, a full 20% feel that neither their overall experience, fellow students nor their faculty helped them feel more comfortable engaging in conversations with people who are different from them. This data tells us that we have opportunities at every level to help students learn about themselves and others. **Attendance at a diverse campus does not mean that one simply becomes aware of issues, or that a student will instantly become comfortable in their own skin as they engage with others who are different.**

In addition to academics, co-curricular activities provide an important role in educating, raising awareness, and enhancing students’ opportunities to learn, communicate, and increase their sense of community at the local and global levels. For example, the survey helped us identify certain issues (i.e. LGBTQ and disability) that were not addressed in the classroom. In fact,



learning about gender and gender identity was reported as largely *not* occurring in the classroom ( $n = 37$ ), but it *is* taking place in co-curriculars more frequently than in any course type ( $n = 17$ ). Thus it is imperative, particularly as we look to increased budgeting challenges and the likely imposition of austerity measures that we do not consider co-curricular programming such as that received through student affairs as simply add-ons or luxuries for the students. Instead, courses and co-curricular activities could present a dual and united opportunity to learn and apply a critical lens to examining difference, while simultaneously increasing awareness of self and how one's own identity can impact themselves and broader society.

### *Results of the Face-to-Face Survey*

To approach the assessment of diversity goals from a different angle, our diversity rubric was given to students in fifteen different upper division classes across the campus in four colleges—the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Natural and Health Sciences, the College of Business and Economics, and the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resource Management. A total of 178 students were directly asked about their learning of: Sense of Place (of the Big Island), Sense of Humanity (Respect), Sense of Others (Empathy), and Sense of Self. All sets of responses by students were read by two members of the Assessment Support Committee who identified the most common answers as well as noteworthy statements.

The face-to-face answers corroborated the findings of the online survey. Students generally reported the most meaningful learning in both their chosen majors or certificates of study—whether it be Business Administration or Drama. Several culture related fields of study (such as Japanese Studies, Filipino Studies, Chinese Studies, and Hawaiian Studies) were also identified as being beneficial to students' learning of the four areas on the rubric. (CFR 2.2a) They also complimented a wide range of Student Affairs (co-curricular) programs that enables them to accomplish the four goals as listed on the rubric. Those programs included: Registered Independent Student Organization (RISO) clubs in Campus Center, Housing, the Student Life Center, Global Exchange, and Athletics. (CFR 2.11)

What also became clear is that while many could recall taking an HPP or GCC course, many did not know what "HPP/Hawai'i Pan-Pacific" or "GCC/Global & Community Citizenship" actually meant though many identified having learned of the indigenous culture in general:

- The Hawaiian classes helped me with all of the above, but I have no idea why BIOL 275 counted as GCC. I wanted to take Acting (DRAM 222 I think)...but it was not approved as GCC, while for some reason Microbiology lecture was. [Art Major]

- [My GE's] help me get a deeper understanding of the indigenous, better understanding of the mix pot that Hawaii is, understand how the overthrow impacted the Hawaiian people, and the sugar plantation shaped our culture. [Kinesiology Major]
- My minor, Japanese Studies, is helping me to understand the relevance of Japan in our local society. Filipino Studies is helping me understand the complex history of Filipinos in Hawaii and how it is the new generation's job to pass down that knowledge. . . . By engaging in more cultural activities for my Japanese minor and Fil[ipino] Studies certificate, I gain more insight on how I can help spread and participate in more activities and how it relates to me and my own background. [Japanese Studies Major]
- General Ed courses (including HPP & GCC) didn't do much to develop my understanding of Hawaii. Courses were structured for learning based on professor. Not enough time spent outside the classrooms learning outdoors and applying what we learned in class. [Mathematics Major]
- I don't think I developed much in my GE classes. I attributed them to high school courses and put more of my focus and development into classes that would prepare me for my upper division classes. [Women's Studies Major]
- [HWST 111, HAW 101, KHAW 103, KHAW 104] helped sense of place, proper Hawaiian place names of beaches, hikes, pu'u, ahupua'a. . . . Everyone is different/passionate about something, does not mean it is wrong because you don't value it. Shocking at how many people appreciate Hawai'i 'āina. [Communication Major]
- I do not know what HPP or GCC stand for and what they are supposed to teach. [English & Communication Major]
- No, I don't feel like my General Education courses helped me develop in any of these. But I already knew Hawaii is unique and has great diversity. [Political Science Major]
- My general education requirements have not really given me an understanding of Hawai'i's uniqueness. It makes Hawai'i seem just different, but more diverse [sense of place]....have helped me understand kakou/have a sense of humanity because many of our/the students in the classes are very diverse and come from different places [sense of humanity]....Since I grew up here I am used to being part of a diverse place, but the general courses I am taught here, I do not feel as if it is as diverse as they could be [sense of self]. [Business Administration Major]
- For counseling/advising, I would like to know why I'm taking certain courses rather than just thinking it's a need for my major. [Geography Major]
- My drama professor...makes a point to feature Hawaiian imagery, dialogue, history, representations, etc. in our course exercises. [Performing Arts Major]

Part of the problem with General Education may be that while faculty understand why certain classes count (and not others), those distinctions may not be readily apparent to students. Larger communication of the diversity rubric to faculty, staff, and students is certainly desirable as noted in the

online survey; however, a more comprehensive communication of General Education as a collective experience unique to UH Hilo and how certification ensures the integrity and quality of GE may be needed. Communication among faculty may also be helpful to ensure classes are not taught as siloed, discipline-driven approaches to “diversity.” (CFRs 1.4 & 2.2a)

While comprising a small number, responses about the Thirty-Meter Telescope (TMT) were also apparent in the surveys—and some of these responses were quite emphatic and emotional:

- Seriously, you cannot escape this Mauna Kea stuff. This is one of the most important geographical locations in the world for observation of the physical universe. Researchers come from the most important universities in the world to work on our mountain. But in the middle of campus we have a tombstone for the Hawaiian renaissance and the state flag of Hawaii turned upside down. Cultural sensitivity? –Cultural stupidity. The UH physics program needs to wait 6 years to get a permit for a 5 foot long telescope...at the freaking visitor observation center!!!
- It has barely been mentioned, but we have briefly discussed the TMT protests and project. From this I learned that people on both sides are closed minded to each other – and that it takes a lot to discuss this in a productive manner. I think this speaks to the complexity of the dilemma.
- The board in the [L]ibrary with thoughts on Maunakea is, despite intentions, detrimental to sense of humanity and others. The cards on it are poorly managed and they are often so rude, hostile, and arrogant that they compel one to close their mind, not open it.
- As president of the UAC [University Astrophysics Club], I have learned how to have civil discourse, the importance of hearing/listening to all opinions and how to conduct appropriate conversations. However, I would like to point out that I feel like campus is not promoting civil discourse and is not encouraging students to have appropriate discourse about Astronomy in Hawai`i, or telescopes on Mauna Kea.
- My political sciences courses have all stressed and protected the views of the diverse groups of people that go to school at UHH and live in the State of Hawaii. . . . As to club activities I have felt a bit alienated by the Hawaiian Sovereignty/anti-TMT goals of the pre-law club at times. In general, in Hawaii, my family and I have experienced a lot of racism towards “haoles” which I think in general could be better addressed by UH Hilo.
- Being an Astronomy major, with the current situation on TMT, students in this major have had to be very reflective on the situation and the people around us. Talks with Astronomers and Kupuna have begun furthering the process but it is still an aggressive/hostile environment. After the “protectors” blocked the road, campus seems more segregated and blame seems to be placed on “science” when the issue stems much deeper to a sovereignty issue. But the environment here is to blame/attack students and the professors even, in just promoting the spread of information and FACTS.

Student voices such as these remind us that diversity is not an easy discourse to maintain, especially in instances when indigenous concerns may run counter to those of multiculturalism—the two may not always be compatible in cases such as the TMT or indigenous sovereignty. (CFRs 1.3 & 2.5) This then makes our role as a university all the clearer, especially if it is to house both Hawaiian Studies and Physics/Astronomy. As one student maintains, simply hosting a diverse gathering of opinions is not the same as fostering a vision or path forward: “I don’t know how the University at large, specifically, the administration, played a productive role in showcasing our diversity. They seem to shy away from controversial issues.” While providing safe spaces for the expression of both majors and fields of study is vital if we are to truly embrace our claim as being the most diverse campus in the United States, the University should also think about what its role can be in terms of “leading” from that position of strength. (CFRs 1.3 & 1.4)

*Writing Intensive Assessment: GE & Upper Division*

In AY 2019-2020, we also decided to undertake for the first time an assessment of [Writing Intensive](#), which is a UH System requirement for graduation; this effort addressed UH Hilo being the only campus that had not regularly submitted any data on direct assessment of student skill. Writing Intensive is an instructional strategy designed to use writing to facilitate the learning of a specific discipline while also practicing the basic conventions of academic writing—proper prose and analysis (critical thinking). The Assessment Support Committee crafted a rubric based on faculty experience in certifying and teaching courses for WI. (CFR 2.4)

At the GE (200) level, two sets of classes from two different colleges—AG 263 and HORT 262 in CAFNRM and ENG 257 and ENG 285 in English (CAS) were targeted for assessment. All four are certified for various areas in GE including WI. Using the Writing Intensive (WI) Rubric (below) that the Assessment Support Committee developed, two readers (both teacher and an external faculty member) scored student artifacts with the following results:

**TABLE 4.1.** *Below, WI Rubric and data for assessments in CAFNRM (AG 263 & HORT 262).*

Scale	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
3--Mastery	Student effectively uses correct and specific vocabulary and concepts that enhance the writing; this indicates a full understanding of the subject	Uses sophisticated language that is highly appropriate to academia	Student communicates information in an advanced manner that leads to unique insight
2--Competent	Student uses some vocabulary and/or concepts but does not fully demonstrate a full grasp of the subject	Uses some high level terms but prose is at times simplistic and/or colloquial	Student communicates basic information and some analysis of the material

1--Needs further work	Student does not use vocabulary or concepts and the writing indicates a lack of understanding of the subject	Language is completely inappropriate for academia	Student cannot communicate information in a manner that is logical or rational
<p>AG 263 Composting and Vermicomposting (3) (lecture/lab)</p> <p>Assignment: Journal (10 points each). For each of the lab sessions, a one-page journal should be submitted due one in 7 days. Journals should be typewritten and submitted electronically to: ag263uhh@gmail.com. LATE journals will not be accepted. You will have a chance to get full credit if journals are revised accordingly.</p> <p>Write your journal in narrative (200 words minimum) form containing the following items. Sample journals are posted on Lulima (UH Hilo Learning Platform):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name</li> <li>Log No. and Date of Lab</li> <li>Objectives</li> <li>Activities undertaken</li> <li>Plants and seeds used</li> <li>Fertilizers used, include amounts, application methods</li> <li>Tools used</li> <li>Insights, pictures</li> </ol>			
	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
<p><i>n</i> = 21 57% agreement Correlation = .68, <i>p</i> &lt; .001 <i>k</i> = .48, <i>p</i> &lt; .001</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.5 Reader 2: 2.59</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 1.85 Reader 2: 2.11</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 1.85 Reader 2: 1.92</p>
<p>HORT 262 Principles of Horticulture (3) (lecture/lab)</p> <p>Assignment: Laboratory Notebooks and Photographs (weekly journals) (1-2 pages each). Summary. Each student should maintain organized records of all activities undertaken in each of the scheduled laboratories. This will include the following but not limited to: Date, times, cultivar and scientific names of plants handled and observed, locations, presenters, hosts, methods and materials used, practices observed and undertaken and personal insights. Journal entries should be made for each lab and are intended for use in the future to remember how you grew a crop or did a technique. You will need this journal to write a final report entitled "How to grow a Garden" (compilation of weekly journals) that is due at the end of the semester. You should keep the original, because it is intended for you to have when someone asks you how to grow a garden. It should contain the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to set up the garden arrangement of crops by height and spacing</li> <li>Method of planting (direct or transplant), fertilizers and placement</li> <li>Crop, cultivar (cultivated variety), times to harvest</li> <li>Plant spacing</li> <li>Date of first harvest</li> <li>Maintenance activities (fertilization, weeding, watering, etc.)</li> <li>Pest management, techniques to employ</li> <li>Overall comments and evaluation (may include photos)</li> </ul> <p>Electronic documents (submitted via Lulima) are acceptable. Two-point deduction per day will be assessed for late submissions.</p>			
	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
<p><i>n</i> = 17 76.5% agreement Correlation = .856, <i>p</i> &lt; .001 <i>k</i> = .663, <i>p</i> &lt; .001</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.76 Reader 2: 2.82</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.64 Reader 2: 2.58</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.52 Reader 2: 2.47</p>

**TABLE 4.2.** *Below*, Data for assessments in CAS (ENG 257 & ENG 285).

<p>ENG 257 Multicultural Literature (3)</p> <p>Assignment: Thirty (30) minute in-class writing on the African novel <i>Nervous Conditions</i>. Assignment addresses English SLOs 1-5:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the basic concepts and methods used in the study of literary texts</li> <li>2. Apply analytical concepts and terms to writing assignments</li> <li>3. Master correct MLA citation style</li> <li>4. Practice and demonstrate the fundamentals of literary analysis in class discussions and sophomore-level essays</li> <li>5. Prepare and articulate coherent interpretations of literary texts in critical papers that identify and analyze relevant topics using correct citation style</li> </ol> <p>In-class free writes must: include a literary analysis in response to a prompt given by the teacher; use examples and details from the assigned text; demonstrate critical thinking skills; demonstrate familiarity with the text.</p>			
	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
<p><math>n = 15</math> 47% agreement Correlation = .61, <math>p = .015</math> <math>k = .33</math>, <math>p = .002</math></p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 1.93 Reader 2: 2.26</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.06 Reader 2: 2.26</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.20 Reader 2: 2.33</p>
<p>ENG 285 Intro to News Writing &amp; Report (3)</p> <p>Assignment: Analysis of Front-Page News Items. Students will summarize a front-page news story and identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeliness</li> <li>• Impact</li> <li>• Prominence</li> <li>• Proximity</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• The unusual</li> <li>• Currency</li> <li>• Necessity</li> </ul> <p>Submissions must: apply the "news values" information and specific terms of Chapter 3 of the textbook; engage issues of diversity and national and global awareness by reviewing what may be the top news story on the front page of publications in other countries and other cities; convey an understanding that news values may differ based on city, country, cultural values, news publication and population size of a community - covered in the text chapter.</p>			
	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
<p><math>n = 19</math> 47% agreement Correlation = .61, <math>p = .617</math> (correlation is not greater than 0) <math>k = .19</math>, <math>p = .180</math> (kappa is not greater than 0)</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.57 Reader 2: 3.00</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.73 Reader 2: 2.78</p>	<p>AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.63 Reader 2: 2.73</p>

The results were mixed, with scores for a small number of students falling slightly below “competent.” Since the majority of students in these four courses are non-majors, speculation is that students may be less engaged with the materials and subjects. Nevertheless, the results, vis-à-vis the learning objectives of the assignments, showed that students overall were demonstrating what faculty considered successful learning. (CFRs 2.2a, 2.3, & 2.4)

Data from a range of upper division classes from four colleges showed a higher level of skill, suggesting that writing intensive for majors within their chosen fields have a higher level of engagement:

**TABLE 4.3.** *Below*, Upper Division WI Assessment Data by College and Course.

Scale	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
3--Mastery	Student effectively uses correct and specific vocabulary and concepts that enhance the writing; this indicates a full understanding of the subject	Uses sophisticated language that is highly appropriate to academia	Student communicates information in an advanced manner that leads to unique insight
2--Competent	Student uses some vocabulary and/or concepts but does not fully demonstrate a full grasp of the subject	Uses some high level terms but prose is at times simplistic and/or colloquial	Student communicates basic information and some analysis of the material
1--Needs further work	Student does not use vocabulary or concepts and the writing indicates a lack of understanding of the subject	Language is completely inappropriate for academia	Student cannot communicate information in a manner that is logical or rational
	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
<b>CAS</b>			
<b>ANTH 387</b> <i>n</i> = 17 71% agreement Correlation = .89, <i>p</i> < .001 <i>k</i> = .61, <i>p</i> < .001	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.64 Reader 2: 2.76	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.41 Reader 2: 2.35	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.58 Reader 2: 2.64
<b>GEOG 430</b> <i>n</i> = 12 50% agreement Correlation = .88, <i>p</i> < .001 <i>k</i> = .35, <i>p</i> = .014	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.41 Reader 2: 2.41	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.16 Reader 2: 2.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.33 Reader 2: 2.16
<b>SOC 377</b> <i>n</i> = 11 73% agreement Correlation = .84, <i>p</i> = .001 <i>k</i> = .56, <i>p</i> = .010	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.90 Reader 2: 2.90	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.63 Reader 2: 2.72	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.63 Reader 2: 2.63

<b>CNHS</b>			
<b>BIOL 481</b>			
<i>n</i> = 4 75% agreement Correlation = .91, <i>p</i> = .048 <i>k</i> = .60, <i>p</i> = .070 (kappa is not greater than 0 due to small sample size)	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.75 Reader 2: 3.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.75 Reader 2: 2.75	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.75 Reader 2: 2.75
<b>GEOL 432</b>			
<i>n</i> = 6 83% agreement Correlation = .98, <i>p</i> < .001 <i>k</i> = .79, <i>p</i> < .001	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.33 Reader 2: 2.33	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.16 Reader 2: 2.16	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.33 Reader 2: 2.16
<b>NURS 410L</b>			
<i>n</i> = 4 0% agreement Correlation = -.33, <i>p</i> = .367 (correlation is not greater than 0)	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.75 Reader 2: 3.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.00 Reader 2: 3.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.25 Reader 2: 2.75
<b>CoBE</b>			
<b>MGT 490</b>			
<i>n</i> = 4 50% agreement Correlation = .93, <i>p</i> = .037 <i>k</i> = .333, <i>p</i> = .157 (kappa is not greater than 0 due to small sample size)	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.50 Reader 2: 2.50	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.25 Reader 2: 2.75	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.50 Reader 2: 2.50
<b>KH'UOK</b>			
<b>KHAW 304</b>			
<i>n</i> = 11 55% agreement Correlation: .74 ( <i>p</i> = .009) <i>k</i> = .375, <i>p</i> = .005)	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.00 Reader 2: 2.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.27 Reader 2: 2.00	AVERAGES Reader 1: 2.09 Reader 2: 2.18

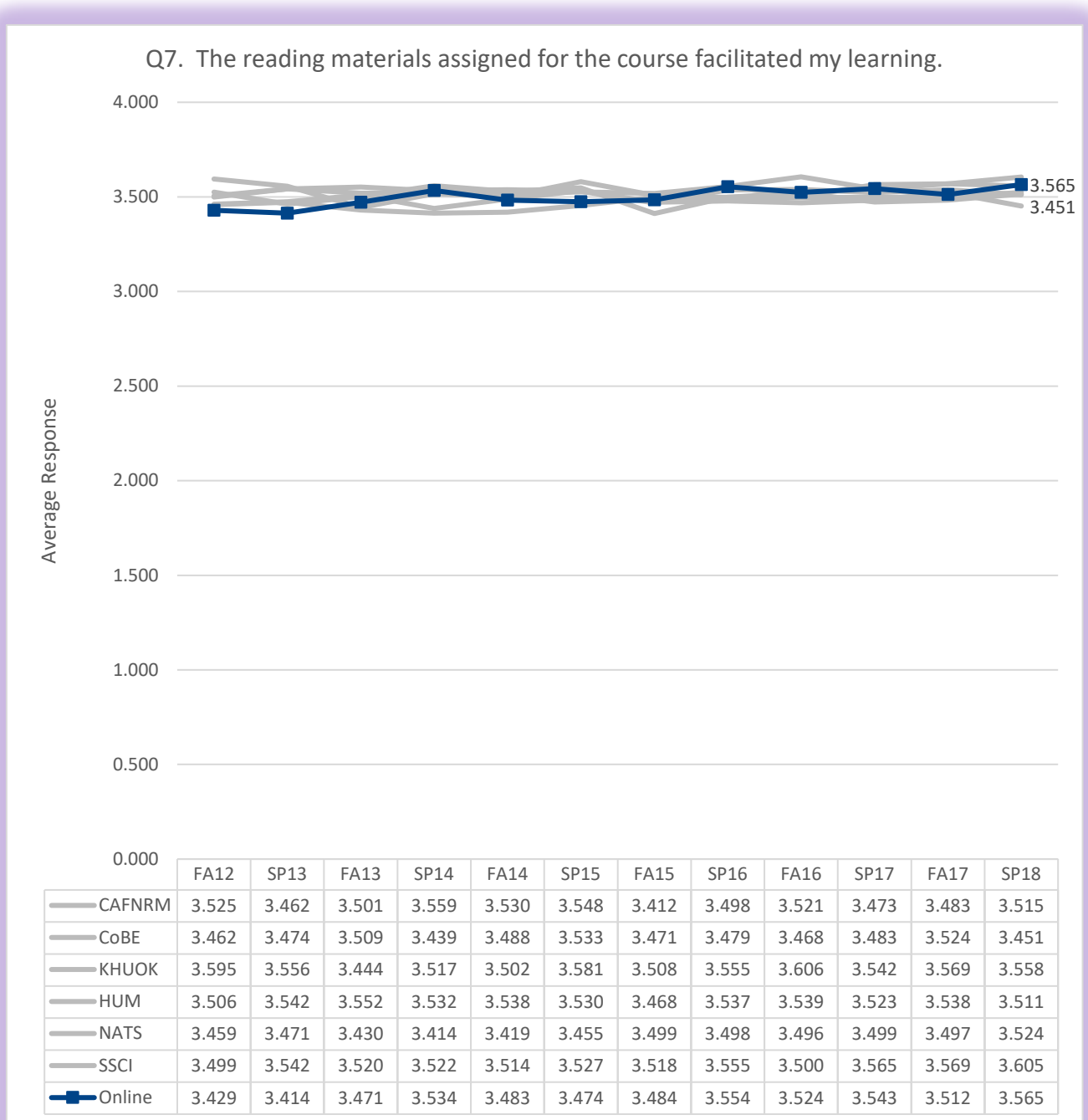
All courses reported upper division student work at or above basic competency as set forth in the rubric, although it is understood that on a three-point scale scores may skew higher. (CFR 2.6) But work lies ahead of the Assessment Support Committee in that inter-rater reliability was below 50% in some instances (even though all scores were within one point of each other); this suggests better calibration is needed to ensure that teachers have the same understanding of “competent” student work as do external readers. The first step has been taken in that the WI Rubric is now posted on the [Writing Intensive Program webpage](#); this should help communicate that WI is not necessarily the same as Written Communication and help faculty with certification. (CFRs 1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, & 4.1) Committee members are again gearing up for WI assessment in conjunction with Information Literacy for AY 2020-2021 and for Summer of 2021. (CFRs 2.4 & 2.6)



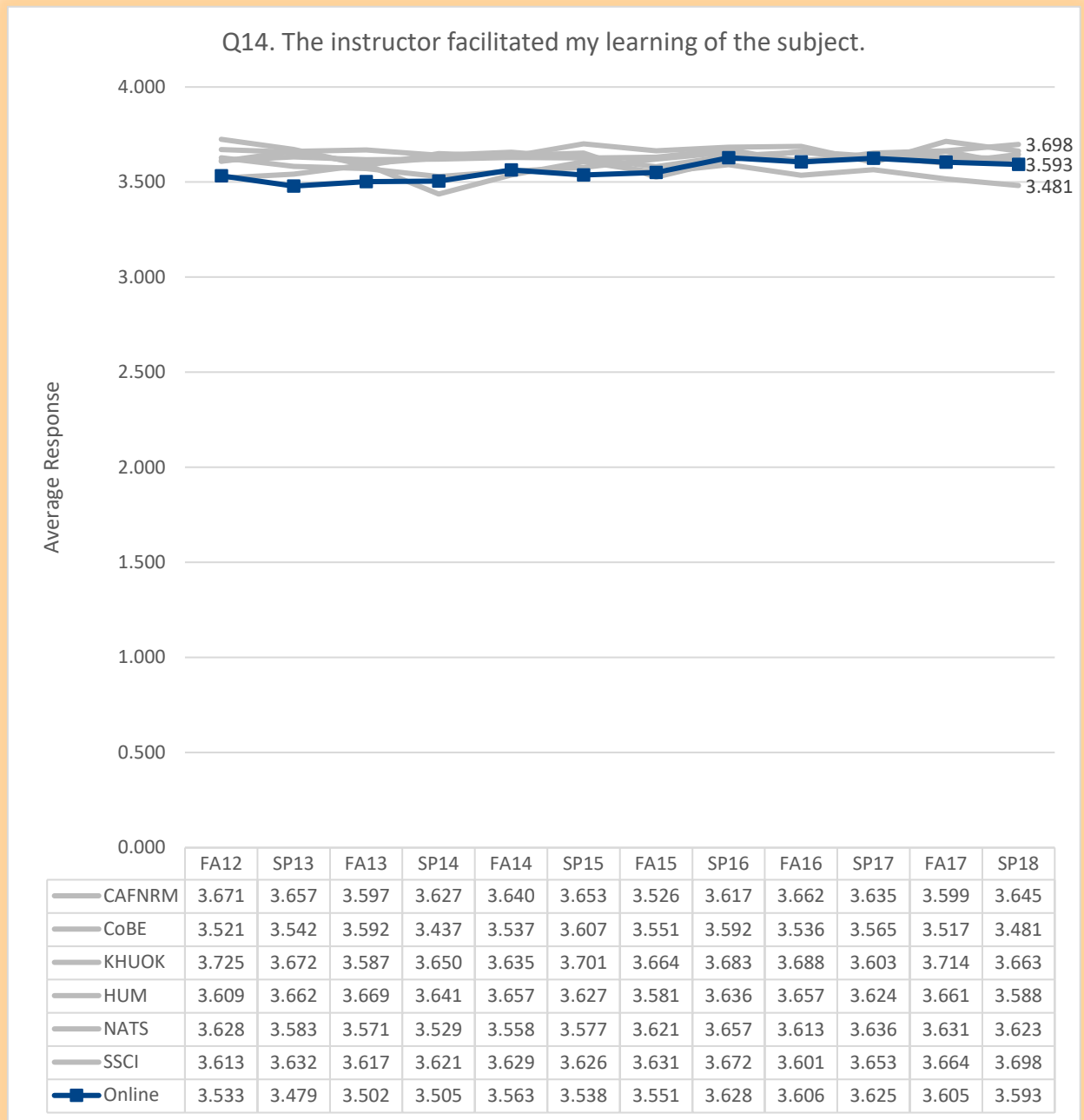
*Distance Learning Assessment*

UH Hilo is part of a system-wide teacher evaluation program that collects data on a range of feedback from students, including two questions directly tied to learning. (CFR 2.9) The following show averages for DL (blue) in comparison to campus average for all face-to-face courses, from 2008 through 2018:

**TABLE 4.4.** *Below, DL versus F2F for Question 7.*



**TABLE 4.5.** *Below*, DL versus F2F for Question 14.



Indirect assessment reveals that there is no statistical difference between DL and face-to-face courses in student perceptions of learning. In fact, DL averages were marginally higher in comparison to some college averages (which are face-to-face only). (CFR 4.4)

The direct assessment of student work is the purview of departments, with the following example submitted by the Department of English which wanted to gauge credit hour compliance and student

learning outcomes for its summer courses. (CFR 2.4) In Summer of 2020, the department looked at both Summer Session I (4-week session) and Session II (6-week session), and worked with UH Hilo librarians who served as second readers to externally validate scores. The results of the assessment of WI learning showed courses were on target with regard to student performance:

**Table 4.6.** *Below*, Data for DL English courses, Summer 2020.

Scale	Learning of course materials (vocabulary)	Prose/Discourse	Analysis/Insight
3--Mastery	Student effectively uses correct and specific vocabulary and concepts that enhance the writing; this indicates a full understanding of the subject	Uses sophisticated language that is highly appropriate to academia	Student communicates information in an advanced manner that leads to unique insight
2--Competent	Student uses some vocabulary and/or concepts but does not fully demonstrate a full grasp of the subject	Uses some high level terms but prose is at times simplistic and/or colloquial	Student communicates basic information and some analysis of the material
1--Needs further work	Student does not use vocabulary or concepts and the writing indicates a lack of understanding of the subject	Language is completely inappropriate for academia	Student cannot communicate information in a manner that is logical or rational
<b>ENG 225</b>			
<b>Averages</b> <i>n</i> = 13 Agreement: 85% Correlation: .76, <i>p</i> < .001 Kappa: .53, <i>p</i> = .001	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.92 Reader 2: 2.77	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 3.0 Reader 2: 3.0	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.70 Reader 2: 2.39
<b>ENG 287</b>			
<b>Averages</b> <i>n</i> = 15 Agreement: 87% Correlation: .89, <i>p</i> < .001 Kappa: .55, <i>p</i> = .001	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.93 Reader 2: 2.93	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.86 Reader 2: 2.86	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.93 Reader 2: 2.93
<b>ENG 345</b>			
<b>Averages</b> <i>n</i> = 17 % agreement: 47% Correlation: .92, <i>p</i> < .001 Kappa: .33, <i>p</i> = .004	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.52 Reader 2: 2.17	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.52 Reader 2: 2.29	<b>AVERAGES</b>  Reader 1: 2.35 Reader 2: 2.11

Given that many courses are taught as DL in the summer months and are often truncated, targeting summer session for these kinds of assessments can hopefully ease faculty workloads during the regular school year as well as help UH Hilo ensure credit hour compliance and quality of learning. The Assessment Support Committee will be looking to undertake a larger range of WI assessment in the summer months, beginning in 2021. (CFRs 2.2, 2.2a, & 2.6)

### *Going Forward—Sustaining Assessment in the Era of COVID*

One of the challenges going forward will be sustaining assessment efforts. With the current COVID crisis showing no signs of abatement going into the Spring 2021 semester, the larger UH System is forecasting a problematic downturn in tuition revenue and state funding. Adding to the stress of the sudden conversion of instruction and services to a DL platform are the uncertainties about furloughs, pay cuts, and elimination of programs.<sup>8</sup> This has only added to the reluctance of departments to undertake broader assessments beyond core competencies vis-à-vis programmatic learning goals. What is certain is the commitment of key faculty leaders on campus, including those on the Assessment Committee—the majority are returning to serve as readers without remuneration. This group is expanding its scope to support individual faculty efforts in core competency assessment within majors; individuals and small teams are also undertaking projects, one of the more promising is surveys of successful majors (indirect assessment). In Spring of 2020, a Communication faculty member (who serves on the Assessment Support Committee) worked with the Chair of Kinesiology to undertake the survey to help both programs begin gearing up for program review by posing to them questions taken directly from the WSCUC prompt for student success: “Which programs are particularly effective in retaining and graduating their majors? What can be learned from them? What is the students’ experience like?” The [successful majors survey data](#) was provided to the departments and to the committee responsible for Section 5: Student Success. (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, & 2.13) The hope is to replicate this for less popular majors to see if the observations made of Communication and Kinesiology students can result in actionable recommendations for other departments. We are also strategizing—keeping things simple, manageable, and personable may be the key to ensuring assessment doesn’t become an additional burden and/or an insurmountable task given these extremely challenging times.

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<sup>8</sup> Leila Fujimori, “[UH regents urged not to cut personnel](#),” Star Advertiser, August 20, 2020.

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