

RELIGION, THEOLOGY, AND CULTURE 2 CORE ASSESSMENT REPORT

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 1, 2017

Introduction

The Core student learning objectives identify the educational priorities for all undergraduates in Santa Clara University's Core Curriculum. Assessment of student learning is ongoing in the Core—we seek to understand in what areas of the learning objectives students are challenged or excel, and how the Core can offer better support for faculty teaching in these areas.

This assessment report summarizes the process and findings from an assessment of the three learning objectives for the Religious, Theology, and Culture 2 (RTC 2) Core requirement. When the 2009 Core was approved, RTC 2 was described in the following way:

“The second course in RTC invites students to deeper engagement with the study of religion through the application of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approaches to complex religious phenomena, past and present. By providing multiple, integrated perspectives, this course seeks to enrich students' appreciation for the diversity of human religious expression. This course, which may be either lower or upper division, is to be taken only after completion of RTC 1. It would be an appropriate place to continue the Core's current openness to courses offered by faculty from a variety of disciplines, such as those in the humanities.”

The Core learning goals for RTC2 include:

- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments.
- **Complexity:** An approach to understanding the world that appreciates ambiguity and nuance as well as clarity and precision.
- **Religious Reflection:** Questioning and clarifying beliefs through critical inquiry into faith and the religious dimensions of human existence.

The Assessment Process

In winter quarter of 2016-17, the Office of Assessment asked faculty teaching RTC 2 classes in the core curriculum to participate in an assessment of student work related to the three RTC 2 learning objectives.



Student work was collected from a random sample of students representing 12% of the 471 students enrolled in the RTC 2 courses. Faculty teaching the courses identified the assignments or exam

questions providing the clearest evidence for student learning with respect to the three learning objectives. The Office of Assessment received work from 12 of the 18 RTC 2 classes taught during winter quarter (material from 53 students). Student and faculty identifiers were redacted to prepare it for scoring by a team of faculty members teaching in the area.

Five faculty and one staff member participated in the assessment of the work. They first attended one of two norming sessions in the Spring quarter of 2017 to become familiar with the rubric (see Appendix) used to score student work. Student learning for each objective was scored on a four-point proficiency scale.

After the norming sessions were completed, student work was distributed among the raters to be scored. About 47% of the work was scored by two raters in order to examine whether the rubric was applied consistently across raters. Inter-rater reliability (IRR) was calculated using the software program AgreeStat® for the three learning objectives. The agreement coefficient Gwet’s AC2 was interpreted, using simple ordinal weights and Landis-Koch benchmarks (see Table 1). Overall, it appears the faculty raters were consistent with one another in their scoring and their use of the rubric.

Table 1. Agreement Coefficients

Learning Objective	Gwet’s AC2	Benchmark
LO 2.1	0.85	Moderate
LO 2.2	0.77	Moderate
LO 2.3	0.88	Substantial

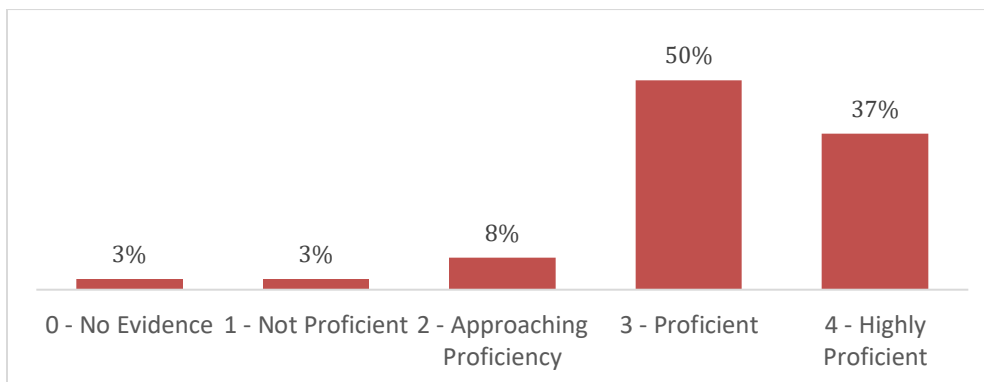
What We Learned

The scores given for work for each learning objective were tabulated and converted into percentages.

LO 2.1 Students will analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, or other cultural expressions of religious belief).

A majority of the student work was judged as proficient or highly proficient for learning objective 2.1 (combined 87 percent, see Figure 1). Only 8% of student work was judged as approaching proficiency and 3% was scored as not proficient. An additional 3% was scored as having “no evidence,” indicating the student work was not judged to address the learning objective at all.

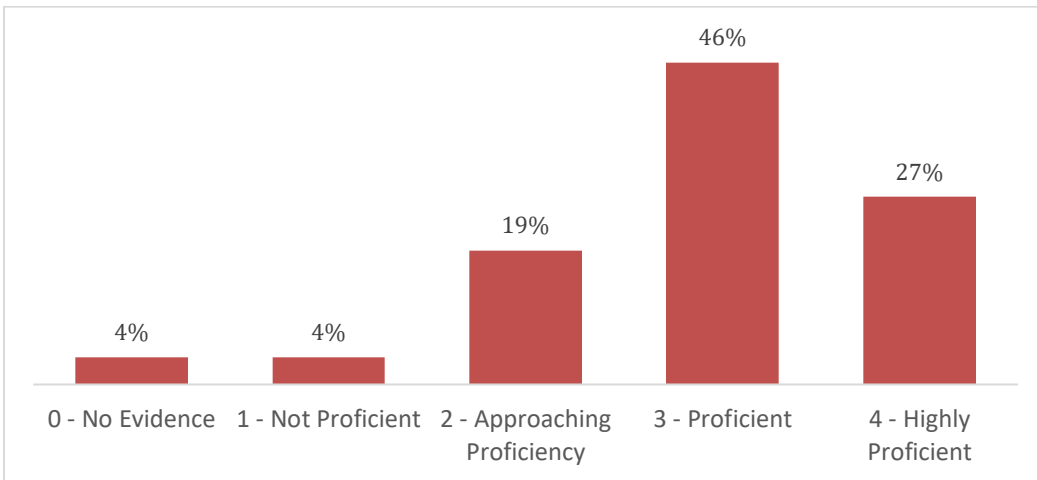
Figure 1. Percent of Rubric Scores for Learning Objective 2.1



LO 2.2 Students will integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.

Proficiency was scored slightly lower for LO 2.2 with 73% of the student work receiving a score of 3 or 4 (See Figure 2). An additional 19% of the work was scored as approaching proficiency and 4% was scored as not proficient. Four percent was also scored as having no evidence of LO 2.2.

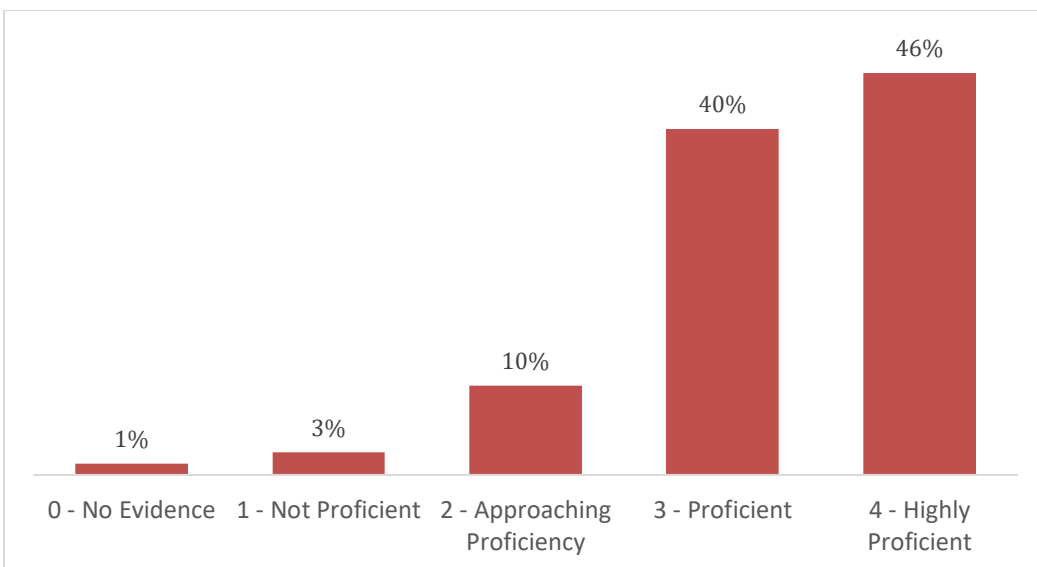
Figure 2. Percent of Rubric Scores for Learning Objective 2.2



LO 2.3 Students will clarify and express beliefs through critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.

For LO 2.3, 86% of the student work received a score of 3 or 4 (See Figure 2). An additional 10% of the work was scored as approaching proficiency and only 3% was scored as not proficient. Just 1% was also scored as having no evidence of LO 2.3.

Figure 3. Percent of Rubric Scores for Learning Objective 2.3



Differences among students

Scores were also examined by group differences to see if there were statistically significant differences by student gender and race or ethnicity. No statistically significant differences were found for scores by gender or race/ethnicity.

Conclusions

Overall, the majority of student work for all three RTC 2 LOs was scored as proficient or highly proficient, indicating students are meeting the RTC 2 objectives. These learning objectives require competency in high level cognitive skills (drawing upon Bloom's taxonomy of learning), including analysis and integration or synthesis. The assessment results affirm that this RTC2 is helping students meet the key learning goals for this Core area: critical thinking outcomes, an understanding of the world that factors in complexity, and religious reflection that involves questioning and clarifying beliefs through critical inquiry.

The faculty scorers identified some questions with respect to each of the learning objectives. Regarding LO 2.1 (*Students will analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, or other cultural expressions of religious belief)*), the faculty scorers raised questions about whether students should be analyzing different *types* of religious phenomena (e.g., art vs. music) or whether sufficiently diverse samples within one type (e.g., music) is acceptable. The scoring decision used in this assessment was to accept two examples of the same genre if they represented diverse works (e.g., historically, stylistically, or culturally). Going forward, this should be clarified among faculty teaching in the area.

RTC 2.2 asks that students "*integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.*" The scorers took as acceptable the application of different disciplinary approaches *or* methods within the same discipline. The faculty involved in the assessment recommend clarification of this learning objective as well. What exactly is considered a different disciplinary approach? Or a "coherent set of religious phenomena"?

Finally, the expectations for RTC 2.3 that "*students will clarify and express beliefs through critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence*" were discussed at length. Scorers decided to make use of the same scoring accommodation as used in RTC1 so that students were scoring equally regardless of whether they expressed their own beliefs or those of others. Clarification of this learning objective will also be important for RTC 2 faculty.

Despite the contrasting findings for RTC 1 and RTC 2, the recommendation that faculty discuss and reach greater consensus around the learning objectives is the same for both core requirements. The Core and the Office of Assessment will host a faculty conversation in the fall for both requirements combined so that RTC faculty may review and discuss these findings, and identify ways to achieve the outcomes they seek for student learning.

Acknowledgments: The Office of Assessment thanks the RTC 2 FCC, the faculty teaching Core courses who participated in the assessment, the faculty members who participated as scorers for the student work, and our student assistants who contribute to the assessment process beginning from sampling to redacting the student and faculty identifiers from student work.

Appendix: Scoring Rubric for RTC 2 Assessment of Student Learning (2016-17)

Objective	Highly proficient - 4	Proficient - 3	Approaching proficiency - 2	Not proficient - 1
<p>RTC 2.1 Analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, or other cultural expressions of religious belief).*</p> <p><i>*Diverse phenomena should include two or more different expressions of those previously described. However, we will score work including two examples of literature or music or art, etc., if they represent diverse works (e.g., historically, stylistically, culturally)</i></p>	<p>Synthesizes evidence to reveal nuanced observations, patterns or insights related to religious phenomena. Response provides developed and perceptive conclusions related to diverse religious phenomena.</p>	<p>Provides evidence to reveal meaningful observations, patterns, or insights related to religious phenomena. Response provides reasonable conclusions related to diverse religious phenomena.</p>	<p>Provides some evidence but the analysis does not effectively reveal meaningful observations, patterns, or insights. Response provides some conclusions related to diverse religious phenomena, but overall, response demonstrates surface understanding of religious phenomena.</p>	<p>Limited information is presented without any meaningful analysis. Response provides weakly supported or superficial conclusions about diverse religious phenomena.</p>
<p>RTC 2.2 Integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.</p> <p><i>Here we are emphasizing application of disciplinary approaches or methods (within the same discipline).</i></p>	<p>Two disciplinary approaches or methods are applied to a set of religious phenomena allowing for thoughtful interpretations and a comprehensive and insightful comparison.</p>	<p>Two disciplinary approaches or methods are applied to a set of religious phenomena allowing for reasonable conclusions and some comparison of how each approach helps explain religious phenomena.</p>	<p>Two disciplinary approaches or methods can be identified in regards to a set of religious phenomena. There is limited development, however, of how one or both of the disciplinary approaches and no clear comparison between them.</p>	<p>Only one disciplinary approach is presented to any extent, and there is little development between that method and an explanation of religious phenomena.</p>

<p>RTC 2.3 Clarify and express beliefs through critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.</p> <p><i>Score the same regardless of whether beliefs are clear from the student's worldview or their analysis of others' beliefs. However, please make a note anytime you see the student's own worldview clearly expressed.</i></p>	<p>Clearly expresses religious beliefs or personal worldview grounded in an analysis of relevant ideas or concepts. Viewpoints and interpretations are insightful. Clear, detailed examples are provided.</p>	<p>Provides a reasonably clear expression of religious beliefs or personal worldview based on some analysis of relevant ideas or concepts. Appropriate examples are included.</p>	<p>Religious beliefs or personal worldview are not fully developed and show limited connection to relevant ideas or concepts. Examples are of limited relevance to the positions.</p>	<p>Provides a superficial reflection of religious beliefs or personal worldview with no clear reference to relevant ideas or concepts. Examples are not provided.</p>
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