

## REPORT ON YEAR III INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL ASSESSMENT: INFORMATION LITERACY - SPRING 2012

### BRIEF SUMMARY

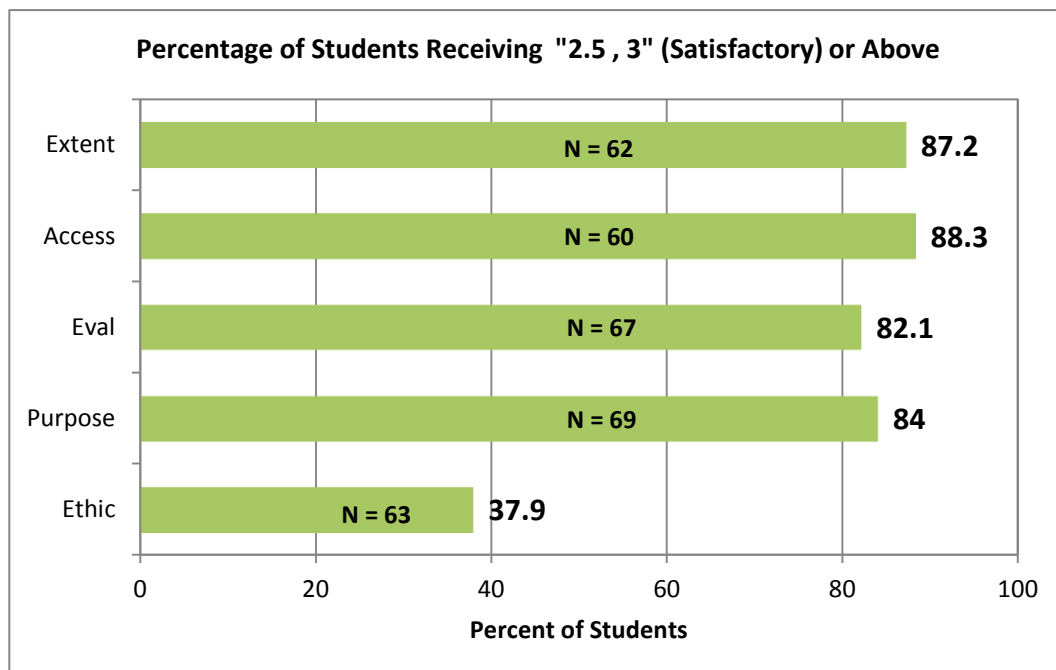
In NECC's third year of institution-level assessment, The HOAP (Help for Outcomes Assessment Plans) Committee, comprised of faculty and administrators, chose to assess Information Literacy. The method chosen was to collect student research projects prepared in response to classroom assignments, products which would subsequently be graded by the instructors. AAC&U's Information Literacy VALUE rubric was selected for product evaluation because with little modification, it aligned with the Information Literacy criteria defined by our Core Academic Skills committee.

The students whose products were collected were those who had earned between 45 – 59 credit hours at NECC, exclusive of developmental coursework, prior to the beginning of the spring 2012 term. Seven raters were recruited; three were library administrative staff persons, and four were faculty members. The rules governing the rating of samples were as follows:

1. Each product would be independently rated twice, with one rater a librarian and the other a faculty member.
2. If the ratings from the two readers differed by more than one point in *any* of the criteria, the product would receive a third reading. This third rating would be by a faculty member.
3. Because of the wide variation in the goals and requirements of assignments, a rater might conclude that certain criteria were not able to be rated. In those instances, the rater would check the "UTR" ("Unable to Rate") column. A "UTR" in any category also triggered a third reading.

In this assessment, although 75 products were available, raters could only make judgments on between 60 to 69 of those, depending on the criterion, because in many instances readers felt compelled to utilize the UTR designation in one or more categories.

**Ratings results** - For the purposes of analyses, we gave the benefit of the doubt to the student; that is, if the student's average score fell between two categories, it is represented in the higher category in the graph below.



Average ratings of 1 were categorized as “Unsatisfactory”; 1.5 and 2 as “Developing”; 2.5 and 3 as “Satisfactory”; 3.5 and 4 as “Superior”; and 4.5 and 5 as “Exceptional”.

**Definitions of categories** displayed in the above graph:

**Extent** – Determines the extent of information needed, the key concepts, and the scope of the research

**Access** – Accesses information using effective search strategies and appropriate sources

**Eval** – Evaluates the information and its sources critically, including relevance and inherent assumptions

**Purpose** – Uses the information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose

**Ethic** – Accesses and uses information ethically and legally, including use of citations

**Limitations** - As noted above, one of the problems we encountered in this assessment was the mismatch between the rubric and the assignments, which was revealed by the use of UTR rating. Although the rubric was distributed to faculty in our initial recruitment, the scope of the rubric is not conducive to a cursory look and we did not ask or expect instructors to substantially change their assignments. In addition, volunteerism among instructors appeared high to start, but dwindled dramatically as the demands of the semester got underway, as indicated in the table below:

Number of...	
Classes identified as having students who met the criteria	532
Faculty associated with those classes	248
Duplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	1253
Unduplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	428
Faculty indicating they would participate	40
Classes associated with those agreeing	77
Duplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	184
Unduplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	156
Number of faculty actually participating	21
Classes associated with the participating faculty	38
Samples actually collected	96
Unduplicated samples for final analyses	75

In this assessment:

- 8.5% of the 248 instructors initially identified participated.
- 7.1% of the 532 classes identified were represented.
- 17.5% of the 428 unduplicated students identified were represented in the final sample.

Effectively, then, the criterion-related skills of between 83.9 and 86% of the students initially selected were *not* represented in the sample. This lack of representativeness greatly affects our ability to draw any institutional-level conclusions concerning students’ Information Literacy skills. In addition, while the number of pages in collected reports ranged from 0 to 13, the highest frequency (reflected in work submitted by 26 students) was 2 pages. This leads us to wonder whether the research projects collected were substantial enough to display meaningful research skills.

With these strong cautions in mind, the data collected indicate that students met the standard of “Satisfactory” and above for four of the five criteria used. On the fifth criterion - “Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally” - only 37.9% were rated as “satisfactory” or above.

## FULL REPORT

### Background

**Development of core academic skills for assessment.** During 2008, a committee of faculty and administrators reviewed the three existing college-wide associate degree competencies, with the goal to revise and update them as necessary. This work resulted in the identification of six core academic skills that students were expected to develop in the course of their studies. These are:

- Global Awareness
- Information Literacy
- Oral Communication
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Science and Technology
- Written Communication

In spring of 2009, members of the Core Academic Skills Assessment Committee developed measurable outcomes for each of the core skills, and a process to assess these outcomes.

**Year I institutional assessment pilot.** Written Communication was chosen for the spring 2010 pilot of the process. For details on the process and the results, see *Report on Year I Institutional Level Assessment – Communication (Writing Skills) - Spring 2010* at <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/201001-IAR.pdf>.

The major issue identified by the raters of the collected student writing products was the wide variability in the type and length of student products, and the level of detail provided in the assignments. Raters recommended that for the next assessment of this skill, a uniform writing assignment be provided. This could help eliminate some product variability which may have clouded students' actual skills and interfered with raters' ability to fully apply the rubric criteria.

**Year II institutional assessment.** In Year II, two skills - Global Awareness and Quantitative Reasoning – were assessed. For the full report, go to: <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/institutional/global-awareness-and-quantitative-reasoning-assessment-2010-11-academic-year/>.

Based on conclusions from the Year I assessment, a uniform assignment was developed. Class instructors who participated administered the assessment to students in their classes. Issues identified for this assessment included the difficulty recruiting faculty to participate given that they had to surrender class time. Even when faculty agreed, it sometimes happened that the identified students were not in class on the day of assessment. Also of concern was the issue of student motivation to complete this assignment, perhaps especially in the absence of any incentives, including grades, and the likely disconnect of the topic from the particular class.

### Year III Institutional Assessment

**Development of method.** The HOAP (Help for Outcomes Assessment Plans) Committee comprised of faculty and administrators had existed for about five years, with their efforts and attention largely focused on program level work. For this institutional level assessment of

Information Literacy, members were asked if they would be willing to direct their efforts to helping to plan and implement the process, and they readily agreed. One member was the reference librarian at NECC, with particular expertise in the area of information literacy. Over the 2011-12 AY, in addition to informal exchanges, the Committee met four times to plan and review the institutional assessment process.

- One of the first tasks was to decide **how to obtain student work to evaluate**. Given the issues that came up with last year's assessment in which a standard assignment was used and administered to students in classrooms, it was decided to return to the approach used in the first year, which was to collect student products prepared in response to classroom assignments – products which would subsequently be graded by the instructors. A timeline for notifying instructors of our plan was developed, starting with a general notification and ending with notifications to just those instructors with targeted students.
- Next was to consider **how the collected products would be evaluated**. The AAC&U's VALUE rubric on Information Literacy was examined, and Committee members decided to adopt it as written, with two formatting modifications. One was to include a column indicating that the criteria were not met at all. The other was to include a column signaling that the product was not able to be rated on the criterion, as it wasn't required in the assignment and therefore not demonstrated by the student. With these changes, the tool to evaluate was now in place (see Appendix 1).
- Our **criterion for inclusion of students in the product collection efforts** was that they would have earned between 45-59 credit hours at NECC prior to the beginning of the spring term, exclusive of any transfer and developmental credit hours. In late February 2012, after the registration "freeze" date, a list was obtained of all students who met the credit hours criterion for assessment. Students identified were organized by classes in which they were enrolled, with some students being enrolled in more than one of the classes.
- An **"opt-out" note was prepared for students**, informing them of the assessment process, and that they had a right to decline participation (see Appendix 2).
- The **process of faculty notification** included the following:
  - To enable faculty to possibly plan ahead with respect to assignments for the spring term, on November 21, 2011, all faculty (full-time, half-time, and DCE) were sent an email to generally inform them about the work being planned for the spring term. The general criteria contained in the VALUE rubric were listed (see Appendix 3).
  - On January 24, 2012, all faculty were again sent an email with more detail about the project, including further details about the collection process (see Appendix 4).
  - On February 29, 2012, faculty who had at least one of the identified students in their class or classes were sent individualized emails asking them to let us know in which of the classes named, if any, an information literacy assignment is being given. The AAC&U Information Literacy VALUE rubric was also provided (see Appendix 5).

- On March 8, 2012, an individualized reminder email with the rubric attached was sent to each of the identified faculty members, encouraging them to respond as to their participation in this project (see Appendix 6).
- On March 15, 2012, an individualized email was sent to faculty members who had agreed to participate. This email included the student “opt-out” note (see Appendix 7).
- On March 29, 2012, individualized emails were sent to faculty who had agreed to participate (see Appendix 8). This email contained the names of their classes as well as of the students in those classes whose products we were seeking.
- On April 18, 2012, another email was sent to all agreeing faculty members reminding them to submit the products, and the associated assignments, for those students identified in their classes (see Appendix 9).

**Product collection results.** The overall summary of samples targeted and collected is represented as follows:

<b>Number of...</b>	
Classes identified as having students who met the criteria	532
Faculty associated with those classes	248
Duplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	1253
Unduplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	428
Faculty indicating they would participate	40
Classes associated with those agreeing	77
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Unduplicated students who met the criteria in those classes	156
Number of faculty actually participating	21
Classes associated with the participating faculty	38
Samples actually collected	96
Unduplicated samples for final analyses	75

Overall, the number of pages in collected reports ranged from 0 to 13, with the average number being 5. Reports collected from students included one case where what was submitted was just a PowerPoint presentation. The number of pages submitted in that case was set to “0”. Seven other submissions included PowerPoint presentations along with a written report. The highest frequency - reflected in work submitted by 26 students – was 2 pages.

**Preparation of samples for rating.** Student products, along with the assignment, could either be sent electronically or directly to the office of one of the co-chairs. All samples collected were logged in, assigned a unique identifier, and then copied. All identifying information related to students, faculty, and classes were removed from the copies, as well as from the assignments that were attached to each sample.

**Raters and rating process.** In early May, the IA co-chairs sent invitations to a number of individuals on campus asking them if they would be willing to serve as raters of the collected products (see Appendix 10). Through this process, seven raters were recruited. Three of the raters were reference librarians, and four were faculty members associated with three different disciplines. The librarians' interest stemmed from their overall central role on campus in helping to support students and faculty members with the development of information literacy skills. The faculty members recruited had been identified as having a strong interest in information literacy skills development for their students. Two of the seven raters had also been involved in the HOAP committee's work developing this assessment process, so were very familiar with the rubric.

On June 14, 2012, the assessment co-chairs met with the seven raters to explain the process and also to conduct a norming session. At this meeting, the rubric was reviewed and sample products were rated and discussed in order to establish a consensus on how each criterion should be interpreted and scored. After that, raters commenced rating the products. During this process, at least one of the co-chairs was available for guidance, as well as an assessment Staff Assistant.

The rules governing the rating of samples were as follows:

4. Each product would be independently rated twice, with one rater a librarian and the other a faculty member.
5. If the ratings from the two readers differed by more than one point in *any* of the criteria, the product would receive a third reading. This third rating would be by a faculty member.
6. Because of the wide variation in the goals and requirements of assignments, a rater might conclude that certain criteria were not able to be rated. In those instances, the rater would check the "UTR" ("Unable to Rate") column.

After a first reading, the rubric with the student product number was marked with an "L" or "F", to indicate whether the rater had been a librarian or a faculty member, and to ensure that the second readings would be done by a member of the other group. Raters were instructed to keep the rubric separate from the sample, and to record the student identifier on the rubric. Once a rating was completed, rubrics were placed in a basket designated for this purpose. The rubrics were regularly reviewed by the co-chairs to determine if a third reading would be required. If so, the product was placed in the appropriate basket for the third reading.

**Post-rating feedback from raters.** On June 15, raters were sent an email asking them for their feedback about the rating experiences (see Appendix 11). The major theme represented in their comments concerned difficulties working with student products when there was a mismatch or lack of fit between the assignments and the rubric criteria. Following are examples of these type comments:

*Unfortunately, the papers we rated individually during the afternoon were not all easy to evaluate using the information literacy rubric. Some assignments didn't require much (or anything) in the way of research; other assignments ignored the need to cite sources or distinguish between the author's opinion and source material. I had great difficulty deciding which parts of the rubric, if any, were applicable to some of the papers.*

*If assignments in information literacy intensive courses are designed so that they can be evaluated using the rubric, I think, based on our group work in the morning, that this kind of rating would work fairly well.*

.....  
*The biggest problem for me was that many of the products did not match up well with the rubric.*

.....  
*The biggest issue I encountered was the nature of the assignments that were submitted. Some really stretched the limits of applying information literacy standards (and a few didn't at all).*

*I'm not sure how much validity the results will have as a baseline of our students' information literacy skills, when not all of the assignments were aimed at those skills.*

Complete comments can be found in Appendix 12.

**Data decisions.** To determine the overall score for each criterion, the two ratings were averaged. If three readers were required for any sample, the two ratings which were closest for each criterion would be averaged (i.e., if Rater One gave a score of 1, while Raters Two and Three gave scores of 2, the overall score for that criterion would be 2, the average of Raters Two and Three). If all 3 scores for a criterion differ and are *equally* close, the average of the two lowest scores would be used (i.e. Rater One gave a score of 1, Rater Two gave a score of 2, and Rater Three gave a score of 3, the average overall score would be 1.5, the average of Raters One and Two).

Third readings were also done when one of the criterion ratings was “Unable to Rate” (UTR). If the third reader also assigned a “UTR”, then the overall rating for that criterion was “UTR.” Otherwise, the assigned ratings were treated as above.

Each student was to be represented by a single writing sample. Many of the samples submitted, however, were duplicate or in two cases, even triplicate entries for the same students, submitted from the same or different classes. In cases of multiple entries, the one product selected was the one which had the overall highest ratings total, the rationale being that if the student could produce at that level once, they likely have that level of ability.

**Ratings results.** For the purposes of analyses, average ratings of 1 were categorized as “Unsatisfactory”; 1.5 and 2 as “Developing”; 2.5 and 3 as “Satisfactory”; 3.5 and 4 as “Superior”; and 4.5 and 5 as “Exceptional”.

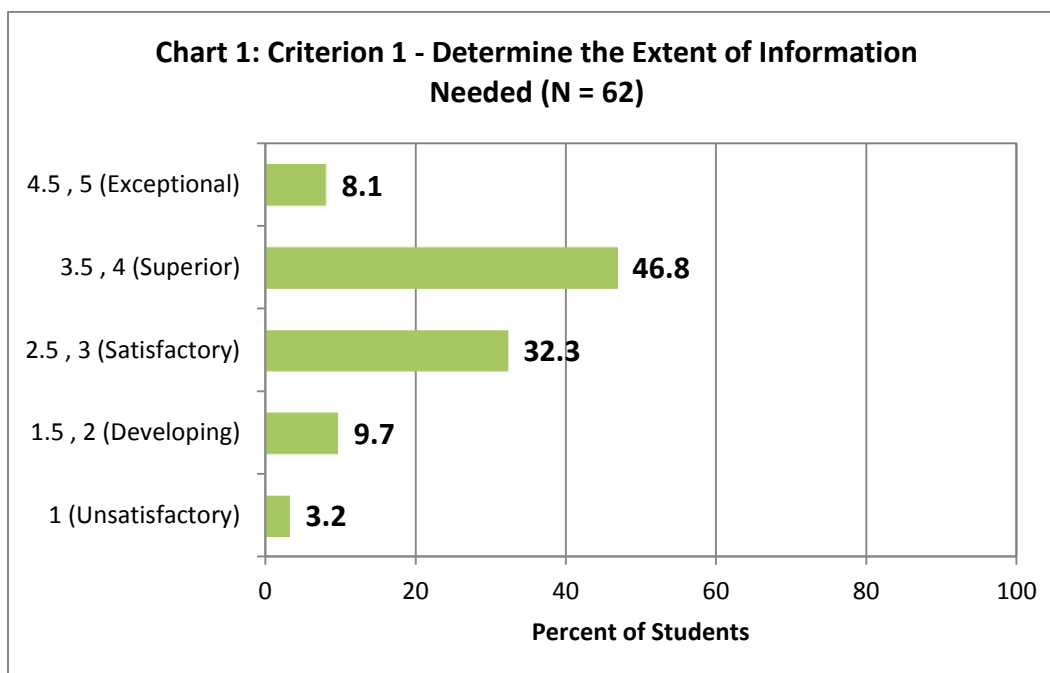
During the rating process, and as evident in their comments presented above, raters frequently mentioned having difficulty rating the particular product they were working on with the rubric due to a mismatch between the assignment, and what was therefore being asked of students, and the criteria being used to rate the product. Consequently, raters expressed that they often used the “UTR” column. When the frequency of “UTR” ratings was examined, it was found to range from 8 to 20% across the criteria. (See Table 1.) Most frequently, “UTR” was used for the criterion, “Access the Needed Information”. Because “UTR” represents an absence of a rating, these ratings were excluded from the final analyses. Consequently, the effective sample size for each criterion was reduced from 75 to between 60 and 69.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RATINGS INFORMATION (N = 75)**

Criteria	Number/Percentage of Final Scores Signifying "Unable to Rate"	Number/Percentage of Final Scores With a Rating Other Than "Unable to Rate"
<b>Determine the Extent of Information Needed</b>	13 / 17.3%	62 / 82.7%
<b>Access the Needed Information</b>	15 / 20%	60 / 80%
<b>Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically</b>	8 / 10.7%	67 / 89.3%
<b>Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose</b>	6 / 8%	69 / 92%
<b>Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally</b>	12 / 16%	63 / 84%

Charts 1-5, presented below, show the percentages of products receiving ratings in each of the five ratings categories for each criterion. The percentages of products rated as “Satisfactory” or above accompanies each table.

**Charts 1-5: BY CRITERION, OF STUDENTS RATED, PERCENT WHO RECEIVED AN AVERAGE SCORE OF ...**

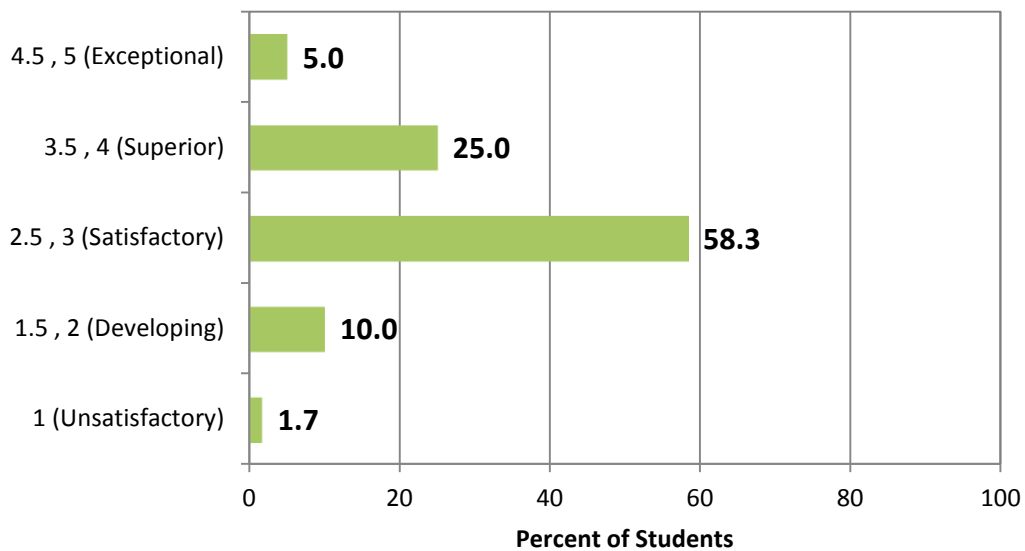


*Percent receiving "2.5 , 3" (Satisfactory) or above = 87.2*

*Percent receiving "3.5 , 4" (Superior) or above = 54.9*



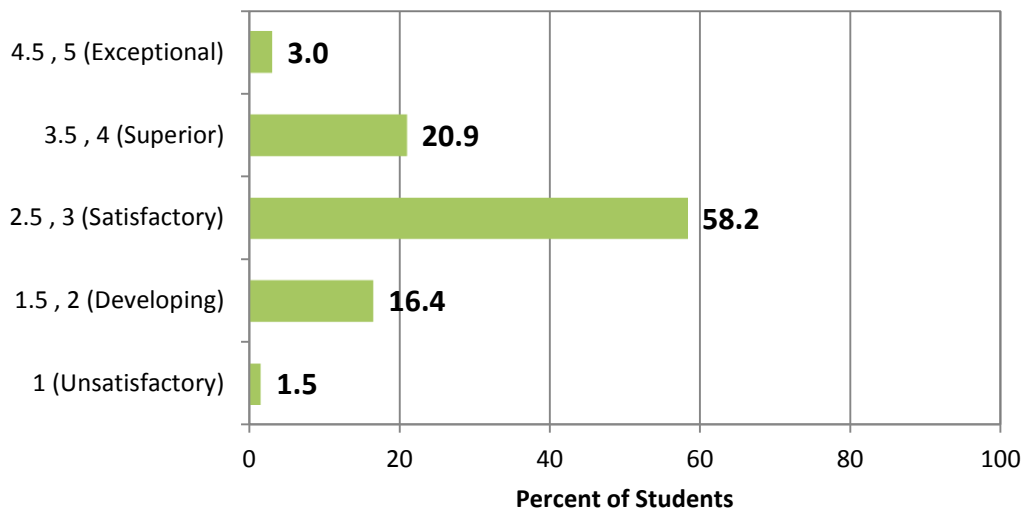
**Chart 2: Criterion 2 - Access the Needed Information (N = 60)**



**Percent receiving "2.5 , 3" (Satisfactory) or above = 88.3**

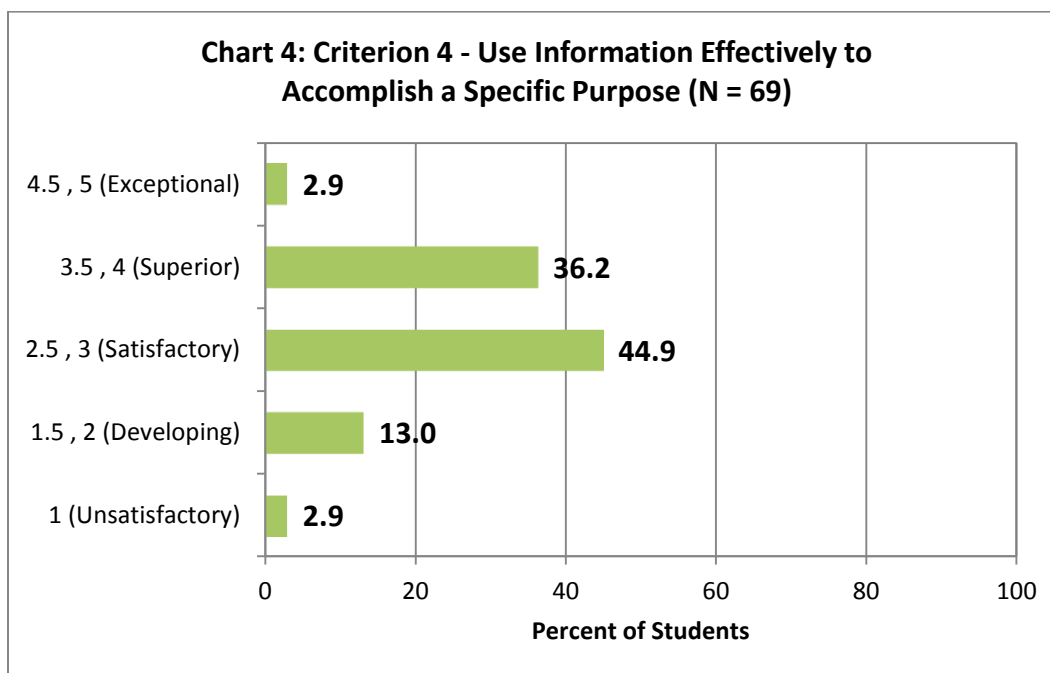
**Percent receiving "3.5 , 4" (Superior) or above = 30**

**Chart 3: Criterion 3 - Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically (N = 67)**



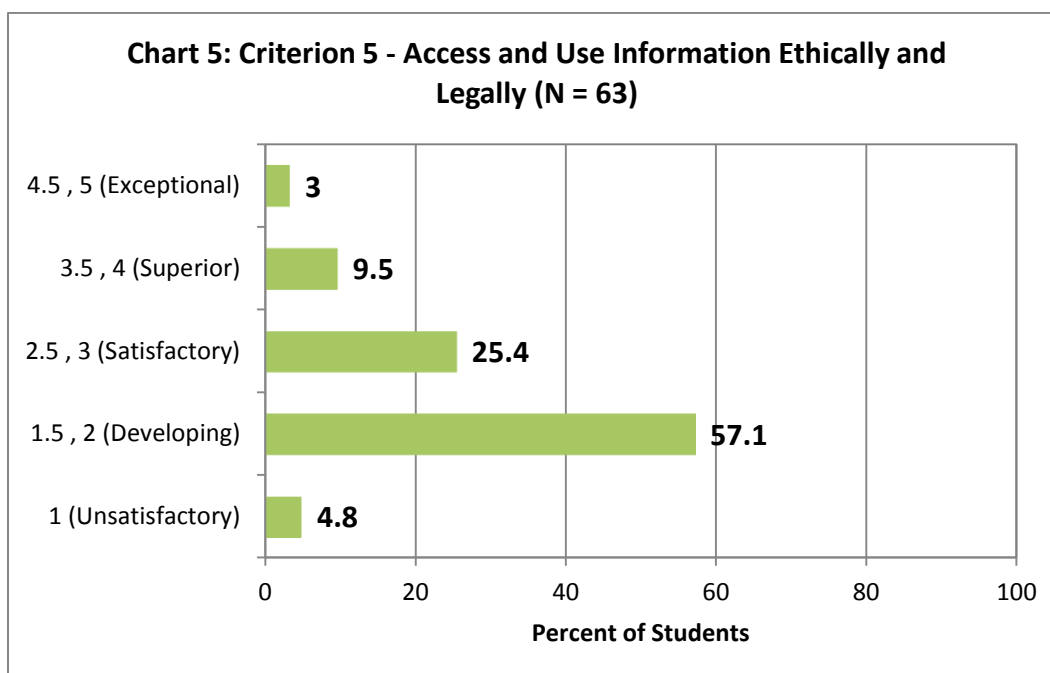
**Percent receiving "2.5 , 3" (Satisfactory) or above = 82.1**

**Percent receiving "3.5 , 4" (Superior) or above = 23.9**



*Percent receiving "2.5 , 3" (Satisfactory) or above = 84*

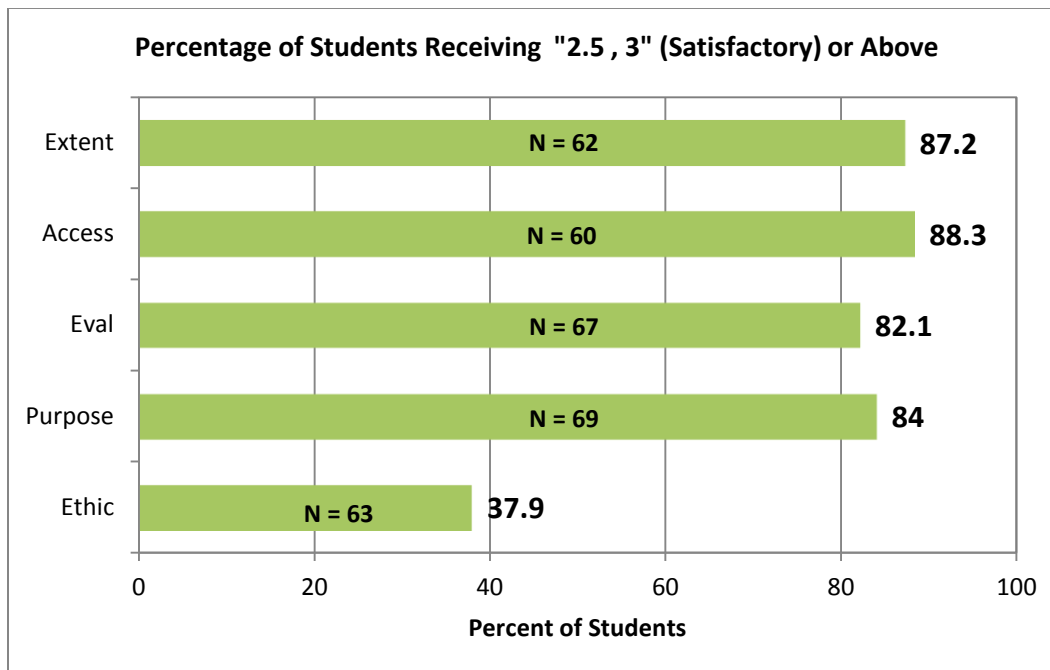
*Percent receiving "3.5 , 4" (Superior) or above = 39.1*



*Percent receiving "2.5 , 3" (Satisfactory) or above = 37.9*

*Percent receiving "3.5 , 4" (Superior) or above = 12.5*

Chart 6 presents for each criterion, the percentage of products rated as “Satisfactory” and above.



**Standards.** For the first institutional-level assessment, which was of Writing Skills, in order to determine an acceptable standard against which to judge our students’ performance and evaluate the ratings results, faculty input was requested. An email was sent to all faculty asking them to share their opinions as to what percentage of the samples (students) evaluated should fall into the “Skilled” category as well as into a combination of the “Competent” or “Skilled” categories. (Note: the categories used for rating the writing samples differed somewhat from those used in this current assessment.)

For this assessment of Information Literacy, we applied the same standards used for the Writing Skills assessment. That is, the standard would be at least 20% for evaluating the percentages of products scored in the “Superior” or “Exceptional” categories combined, and at least 80% as the standard for the “Satisfactory”, “Superior” and “Exceptional” categories combined.

**Standards and ratings results.** Focusing on the percentage of products rated as “Superior” or “Exceptional”, and using the standard of at least 20%, findings include that:

- The standard was met with respect to four criteria – “Determine the Extent of Information Needed” (54.9%), Access the Needed Information (30%), Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically (23.9%), and “Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose” (39.1%).
- The percentage for “Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally” was quite far from the standard (12.5%).

Concerning the percentage of products rated as “Satisfactory” and above, and using at least 80% as the standard, findings include that the standard was met for all criteria (percentages ranging from 82.1 to 88.3) except “Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally” (37.9%).

## Overall Discussion and Summary

All three institutional-level assessments have depended on faculty who volunteer to participate, either by submitting student work or giving class time. In situations where products are to be submitted, a certain amount of participation is precluded when there are no class assignments planned that relate to the skill(s) being assessed. When not all faculty participate, then not all identified students are represented. Extensive non-participation severely limits the ability to generalize across all students.

In this assessment:

- 8.5% of the 248 instructors initially identified participated.
- 7.1% of the 532 classes identified were represented.
- 17.5% of the 428 unduplicated students identified were represented in the final sample.

During the ratings, and again in the context of the comments provided, raters frequently noted the mismatch between assignments and the VALUE rubric being used to evaluate them. Also noted were perhaps the different understandings and expectations of faculty regarding what constitutes research, which again is basically the assignment-rubric mismatch issue. This assignment mismatch was also noted by raters in the first assessment of Writing Skills. When there is this mismatch, raters cannot assess the product, which further reduces the effective sample size. In this assessment, although 75 products were available, raters could only make judgments on between 60 to 69 of those, depending on the criterion. Effectively, then, the criterion-related skills of between 83.9 and 86% of the students initially selected were not represented in the sample. This lack of representativeness greatly affects our ability to draw any institutional-level conclusions concerning students' Information Literacy skills.

With that very strong caution in mind, the data collected indicate that students met the standard of "Satisfactory" and above for four of the five criteria used. On the fifth criterion - "Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally" - only 37.9% were rated as "satisfactory" or above.

The lack of volunteerism and an inability to consistently apply the rubric to each assignment were central problems in our conducting and drawing conclusions from institutional level assessment work. In Year II, the uniform assignment created had its own set of problems, namely dependence on faculty volunteers, and possible lack of motivation on the part of students. Going forward we will continue to hone the process by considering the specific skills being assessed and by seeking faculty input on the best way to assess their students and acquire products.

Nevertheless, the work has value if it can stimulate conversations and become a source of encouragement for faculty to examine and consider using the VALUE rubrics. These are the basis for intensive core academic skills course outcomes, and it is likely that the rubrics will receive much attention in those courses. If faculty outside of those courses also adopt the rubric, even if just in part, this could support the intensive course work and allow for a more comprehensive experience for students in the development of these skills.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### RUBRIC FOR 2011/12 INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY

	<b>5 EXCEPTIONAL</b>	<b>4 SUPERIOR</b>	<b>3 SATISFACTORY (Meets expectations)</b>	<b>2 DEVELOPING</b>	<b>1 UNSATISFACTORY (Does not meet expectations)</b>	<b>0 UNABLE TO RATE - NA</b>	<b>RATING</b>
<b>Determine the Extent of Information Needed</b>	Effectively defines the scope of the research question or thesis. Effectively determines key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected directly relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis completely. Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected relate to concepts or answer research question.	Defines the scope of the research question or thesis incompletely (parts are missing, remains too broad or too narrow, etc.). Can determine key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected partially relate to concepts or answer research question.	Has difficulty defining the scope of the research question or thesis. Has difficulty determining key concepts. Types of information (sources) selected do not relate to concepts or answer research question.	Unable to define the scope of a research question or thesis, or the scope is inappropriate.		
<b>Access the Needed Information</b>	Accesses information using effective, well-designed search strategies and most appropriate information sources.	Accesses information using variety of search strategies and some relevant information sources. Demonstrates ability to refine search.	Accesses information using simple search strategies, retrieves information from limited and similar sources.	Accesses information randomly, retrieves information that lacks relevance and quality.	No outside sources accessed.		
<b>Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically</b>	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.	Unaware of own assumptions. Unable to identify contexts of a position.		
<b>Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose</b>	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources to fully achieve a specific purpose, with clarity and depth	Communicates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources. Intended purpose is achieved.	Communicates and organizes information from sources. The information is not yet synthesized, so the intended purpose is not fully achieved.	Communicates information from sources. The information is fragmented and/or used inappropriately (misquoted, taken out of context, or incorrectly paraphrased, etc.), so the intended purpose is not achieved.	No information from sources is communicated.		
<b>Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally</b>	Students use correctly all of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrate a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly three of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly two of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Students use correctly one of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution) and demonstrates a full understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.	Unable to use any of the following information use strategies (use of citations and references; choice of paraphrasing, summary, or quoting; using information in ways that are true to original context; distinguishing between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution).		

## **APPENDIX 2**

Spring 2012

### **NECC Institutional Outcomes Assessments Note for Students**

Northern Essex Community College's commitment to student success involves the evaluation of student work to help ensure that students are achieving the learning outcomes identified by our college. This process may involve the collection of student classroom products for evaluation at the college level. When collected for this purpose, students' names will be removed from the products so that the assessing is done anonymously. Evaluations carried out at the college level will not impact students' course grades. The process of assigning grades will continue to be the responsibility of the course instructor.

If you do not wish to participate, please notify your instructor.

### APPENDIX 3

November 21, 2011

Dear Faculty,

This spring the college will be conducting an institution-level assessment of our core academic skill in Information Literacy. This skill asks students to do the following:

1. Choose a viable research topic and clearly define research goals.
2. Access needed information effectively and efficiently from a variety of print and electronic sources.
3. Evaluate information critically, choosing relevant, timely and authoritative sources.
4. Use information effectively to produce research projects which accomplish specific purposes required by course instructors.
5. Use information ethically and legally, citing sources in proper style.

If you ordinarily require students in one or more of your classes to do a research project which demonstrates these skills, we hope that you will consider participating in the study. Remember, since we are attempting to assess our effectiveness as a whole, you may be assured that all identifying information, including instructor and class information, will be scrubbed from student products as soon as we receive them.

Early in the spring semester we will contact you again to explain the process in detail, answer any questions you may have, and enlist your support.

Thank you --

Members of the HOAP Committee



## APPENDIX 4

January 24, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, the college is now assessing our institutional-level core skills on a regular basis. Thanks to many of you, in past years, we were able to assess **Writing** as well as **Global Awareness and Quantitative Reasoning**. The results of those assessments may be viewed at: <http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/faculty-resources/program-review-outcomes-assessment/outcomes-assessment/institutional/>.

**This spring we will be assessing our students' skills in Information Literacy.** This skill asks students to do the following:

- *Choose a viable research topic and clearly define research goals.*
- *Access needed information effectively and efficiently from a variety of print and electronic sources.*
- *Evaluate information critically, choosing relevant, timely and authoritative sources.*
- *Use information effectively to produce research projects which accomplish specific purposes required by course instructors.*
- *Use information ethically and legally, citing sources in proper style.*

**If you require students in one or more of your classes to do a research project which demonstrates these skills, we hope you will be willing to help.** Our plan is to target students who have earned between 45 and 50 credit hours by the beginning of this spring term, and **in February, we will begin actively recruiting instructors with identified students.** At that point we will ask you to let us know if you require a research assignment and if you are willing to contribute.

You will *not* have to add or change your curriculum; we ask only to obtain copies of products your students have submitted in response to your usual research assignment. Please be assured that the samples will be used to evaluate students in the aggregate only. All student, instructor, and class identifying information will be removed from the samples before ratings are done.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX 5

February 29, 2012

Dear colleague:

As you know, NECC is now assessing our institutional-level core skills on a regular basis. Thanks to many of you, in past years, we were able to assess **Writing** as well as **Global Awareness and Quantitative Reasoning**.

**This spring we will be assessing our students' skills in Information Literacy.** This skill asks students to do the following:

- *Choose a viable research topic and clearly define research goals.*
- *Access needed information effectively and efficiently from a variety of print and electronic sources.*
- *Evaluate information critically, choosing relevant, timely and authoritative sources.*
- *Use information effectively to produce research projects which accomplish specific purposes required by course instructors.*
- *Use information ethically and legally, citing sources in proper style.*

For this assessment, we have identified classes which have at least one registered student who has earned from 45-59 credit hours at NECC. **One or more of your classes has been identified. If you require students in one or more of these classes to do a research project which demonstrates Information Literacy skills, we hope you will be willing to help.** We are asking that you let us know in which of these classes you are requiring a research assignment that you can then give to us for evaluation using the NECC Information Literacy Rubric. You will *not* have to add or change your curriculum, nor will you be asked to evaluate the assignment with our rubric (although you are welcome to use it if you would like to); we ask only to obtain copies of products your students have submitted in response to your usual research assignment.

**All student, instructor, and class identifying information will be removed from the samples before these ratings are done.** The ratings will then be summarized for the overall purpose of evaluating in the aggregate NECC students' Information Literacy Skills.



**Below you will find a table listing the class(es) we have identified. Please hit “Reply” and then go to the table and indicate with a “Yes” or “No” whether you have assigned a research project/ paper in each of the class(es) listed. Then simply send the email back to us. *We ask that you please reply by March 9.***

INSTRUCTOR	CRN	COURSE	INFO. LIT - YES or NO

For all classes where you say “Yes”, we will get back to you with more specific instructions.

***Thank you very much for your cooperation and support of this project!***

## **APPENDIX 6**

March 8, 2012

On February 29, we sent you an e-mail regarding NECC's upcoming assessment of Information Literacy. We're finalizing the details now, and since we haven't heard from you, we're hoping you will take another look at our original e-mail and let us know whether you will be able to participate. We'll try to make it as painless as possible!

Thanks for considering it --

## APPENDIX 7

March 15, 2012

Dear Colleague,

We are delighted that you are willing to participate in this semester's assessment of Information Literacy!

The next step in this process is to inform students that they have the right to exclude their project from the institutional assessment process. Attached to this e-mail you will find an electronic copy of a note which explains this option. This information should be provided to *all* students (even though we won't be asking you for papers from all of them) and may be done at any time before collecting papers.

You may forward the note to students via e-mail, or if you prefer, you may distribute paper copies of the note. Multiple copies are available from \_\_\_\_, across from \_\_\_\_ at Franklin St., and at the security guard's station at Riverwalk. In Haverhill, you may pick up copies from \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ or you may phone (\_\_\_\_) or e-mail \_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) and she will deliver copies to your office or mailbox.

During the week of March 26<sup>th</sup>, we will send you individually the names of the specific students whose products we would like to collect in the classes you specified

Once again, thank you –

## APPENDIX 8

March 29, 2012

Dear Faculty Member:

**Thank you again for your willingness to participate this spring in NECC's assessment of Information Literacy.**

Although we don't need student products until the end of the semester, we know that some of you will be collecting research projects before then, and will need to return them to students. Therefore, we are providing you now with the names of the students identified for this assessment.

**Below are listed the names of students in your class(es) who have completed the requisite number of credit hours and whose products we would like to collect:**

Instructor Name	CRN	Course	Student Name

**In some cases, you may have the same student(s) in more than one of your class(es) – in those cases, we would like their papers from each class.**

You may forward us electronic copies of their research projects if you have them. Paper copies are also fine, and we'll even copy them for you if you prefer. Please forward copies via inter-campus mail or contact us to make copies or collect them.

**Either way, though, we would like to have copies without grades or comments on them.**

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns –

## **APPENDIX 9**

April 18, 2012

Dear Colleague,

As the semester winds down and you begin collecting research projects for NECC's Information Literacy assessment, we just want to remind you that we are available to help. We realize this is a very busy time and appreciate your willingness to participate, so please don't hesitate to let us know if you have questions or need assistance.

Thanks again --

## APPENDIX 10

May, 2012

**Subject:** Invitation to be an institutional assessment rater

As you probably know, \_\_\_\_\_ and I co-lead the Institutional Assessment effort, and each year we assess one or more of the core skills. This year, we worked with the HOAP Committee (a Committee of NECC faculty and staff) and developed a process to collect and rate student papers that were developed in response to an assignment which included Information Literacy elements. We contacted faculty members who had students with between 45 and 60 credit hours, and have to date collected just over 60 papers.

So we have the papers and the rubric. Now we need raters!

Members of the library staff have agree to participate in this process, and we thought to have four teams of raters, with one librarian and one faculty member in each team. You have all been recommended to participate!

We think that we will need at least an entire day (8 hours), including norming and ratings work. The pay rate is \_\_\_\_\_ per hour and lunch will be served! The date would be some mutually agreeable day in June.

If you are interested in this, please let me know ASAP. After you confirm, we would do a Doodle poll with you and the librarians.

So what do you think? Please let me know.

Thank you!



## **APPENDIX 11**

June 15, 2012

Hello all,

Thank you very much for your hard work yesterday! We have one more request!

In the past, \_\_\_\_\_ and I have found the feedback provided by the raters to be very useful for identifying what worked, what were the challenges, suggestions for the future, etc. We have included these comments (no names!) in our final reports.

Could you each please send me your comments/ perspectives about yesterday's rating work? What did you think of the process, what were the positives, the challenges, what you learned, what you might recommend going forward, etc.

Your comments will be much appreciated, and I'm sure very valuable!

Thank you again!

## APPENDIX 12

### Rater Comments

*I agree with the comments of my colleagues. I am very glad that I participated in the process. I learned quite a bit and it will help me personally in designing future assignments that integrate the core academic skills. That said, I think that in many ways, we put the cart before the horse. One of my class assignments was used, and I knew immediately after we did the sample scoring that there would be problems with my students' work and scoring the assignment accordingly.*

*My assignment does not match the qualifications of the rubric. As I was doing the scoring, it became obvious that this was also the case for many of the other assignments submitted by other professors. However, even if they did not match the rubric, I believe that good research did take place. For example, the \_\_\_\_ courses that had the students research and evaluate one article were excellent, but the issue is ONE research article and therefore the assignment does not match the criteria. I think this poses an issue that makes a decent assignment score as if it is not a good assignment resulting in a skewed assessment. While I can't fix this for everyone, I can personally make the decision to adjust my assignment so that it better fits the criteria. I will use the rubric to guide my assignment and put the horse back in front of the cart!*

*Overall, it was a very good learning experience and I would offer to do it again. I think it is important that the college sees this as an improvement process that needs to be fine-tuned rather than a process that is already etched in stone. This is just the beginning of important work in assessment of the core academic skills.*

---

*I had the exact same concerns as everyone else. It was hard when faced with a \_\_\_\_ report that clearly was not research driven. I fear that my assessments are way off. I found myself second guessing exactly where to mark for certain criteria like when it was clear that they were asked to research and a Works Cited was included but there were no citations throughout. I was hesitant to even give it any rating but ultimately settled on unsatisfactory on the legal and ethical aspect. This sometimes felt a little strange as one or two of the other criteria would be high because it was evident that outside material was incorporated. It just didn't feel that there was a real consistency to any of it--the samples, my own ratings, etc. I apologize for that. I did my best and I know part of these elements are what you need to know if you ever do this again. I was happy to help--it's always an enlightening experience.*

---

*I thought the morning session during which we discussed our ratings of the sample papers was very effective in preparing us to work together on the project. Instructors are much more experienced with evaluating students' work, so it was valuable to hear how faculty members viewed the level of achievement in each paper. Hopefully it was also useful for instructors to understand librarians' perspectives on how students find, evaluate, and use information.*

*By the conclusion of the last group rating exercise, it seemed like we (faculty and librarians) were generally in agreement about how to apply the rubric to the kind of papers that were under consideration.*

*Unfortunately, the papers we rated individually during the afternoon were not all easy to evaluate using the information literacy rubric. Some assignments didn't require much (or anything) in the way of research; other assignments ignored the need to cite sources or distinguish between the author's opinion and source material. I had great difficulty deciding which parts of the rubric, if any, were applicable to some of the papers.*

*If assignments in information literacy intensive courses are designed so that they can be evaluated using the rubric, I think, based on our group work in the morning, that this kind of rating would work fairly well.*

---

*...I agree with the comments of others regarding the products. My guess is that about 20% were not applicable to the rubric.*

*And I thought a good handful of the essays were outstanding examples of solid college writing.*

*If you could possibly weed out the \_\_\_\_\_ reports ... that didn't fit the assignment, it might be a really good idea.*

*I think the large pile of "3rd reading" essays were the result of the NA products.*

---

*I totally agree with both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ comments. So many of the assignments really did not fit the rubric so I worry that the results will not be truly valid. I know that the rubric was provided to instructors during the process of selecting samples, but I think it is complicated and was probably not read or understood. I would suggest including a few bullet points condensing the rubric such as:*

*Assignment must require student to*

- conduct research,*
- select appropriate sources to use in assignment,*
- provide in-text citations or footnotes, and*
- create a works cited page*

*The process was fine and I too enjoyed the learning process and getting to know the people.*

*... I don't think it is necessary that all information literacy assignments must necessarily be changed to fit the rubric. I think there were a few great assignments that we saw that shouldn't have to be changed for the sake of internal assessment. Rather, I think that the*

*work products that we chose to assess must fit the rubric and the classes that are designated information literacy intensive must meet the enumerated criteria.*

---

*I think the process was well planned and worked well. The biggest problem for me was that many of the products did not match up well with the rubric. For example, \_\_\_\_\_ reports and projects where the sources were provided for the students. It was difficult or impossible to score these, and I worry that they may skew your results.*

---

*It was a very illuminating exercise, and enjoyed working with the others in the group. The biggest issue I encountered was the nature of the assignments that were submitted. Some really stretched the limits of applying information literacy standards (and a few didn't at all).*

*I'm not sure how much validity the results will have as a baseline of our students' information literacy skills, when not all of the assignments were aimed at those skills. Perhaps a truer measure would be to only include in the results the ratings of the better assignments, although that would significantly reduce your sample size.*