

ARTS 104: Art Appreciation
Learning Outcomes Assessment Project
Executive Summary

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Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Assessment Project

ARTS 104, Art Appreciation, is a general education course which provides a basis for observing, understanding, and enjoying art. Its content covers a broad range of topics related to art, including the Formal Elements of Art, Media Used in Art Making, Styles and Historical Influences of Art, Cultural and Social Influences in Art, Analysis in Art/ Theories of Art Criticism, and Identifying Resources for Art, such as galleries and museums. The objectives chosen for evaluation were considered essential to the course and consistent with Art Appreciation as it is universally understood.

The objectives assessed were:

1. Ability to apply fundamental concepts of aesthetics toward the interpretation of art.
2. Familiarity with the various media used to make art.
3. Familiarity with the formal elements of art and key works of art.

It was decided to use a pre-test as well as a post-test as the assessment instrument, and to include visual elements, such as slides or images of art as part of the test. A secondary objective of the committee was to establish common goals and encourage faculty interaction among those teaching ARTS 104 across the three main CCBC campuses. Determination of a common text for the course and greater consensus on content were corollary objectives.

A test of thirty-five questions was devised. Ten of the questions referenced three artworks, shown on a screen. The images were made available to instructors on a CD and sent as a file attachment. This first version of the LOA was given as a trial in Fall 2005 and Spring 2006. Upon feedback, the instrument was lengthened to fifty questions for Fall 2006. The test questions were validated by outside instructors of Art Appreciation and Art History.

Stage 2: Implementation of the Design and Collection/Analysis of Data

Instructors gave the test during the first week of classes, Fall 2006, then again at semester's end. All full-time and adjunct faculty were asked to participate. They were encouraged to give adequate grade weight (to the LOA) for students to take the test seriously.

A common text, Exploring Art, was selected, thus meeting one of the original objectives of the LOA committee. Faculty teaching ARTS 104 across all campuses used the same text for the first time, free to supplement it as they chose, in spring 2006. Full compliance with the common text was achieved in Fall 2006, ensuring greater consistency and simplifying book orders/exchanges.

The assessment was administered to 251 students on Catonsville, Dundalk and Essex campuses, representing 7 of the 10 sections of ARTS 104 conducted. [137 students were matched to demographic data.]

Overall mean scores across all sections revealed a correct score of 72%. Of students taking the course, 61% were Caucasian/ White, 26% were African American/Black, and 13% were from other ethnic groups. Caucasian students and those of other ethnicities scored higher than African American students with the greatest difference occurring in Primary Objective A: Understanding Concepts. Overall mean percent correct for Caucasian/White students was 75%; for African-American/ Black students 62%. Male and female students scored similarly on the assessment. Across all Art 104 sections, students scored highest on Objective C: Familiarity with key artworks.

Students on the Dundalk campus had significantly higher scores than students on other campuses. It should be noted that this reflects only one small (12 students) section compared with nine larger sections at other campuses. Further, five sections at Catonsville were represented in the LOA results by only 29 students, compared to 96 students from 4 sections at Essex.

Analysis also revealed a significant negative correlation (greater than .05%) between LOA score and final course grade.

Stage 3: Redesign of the Course to Improve Student Learning

Upon reviewing results and analysis of the Fall 2006 assessment, recommendations were made by the LOA committee for both more consistent (across campuses) instruction and improved LOA implementation. Faculty members met to discuss effective techniques for conveying Objective A: Understanding Concepts, in particular. Presentations were made by instructors who had strong outcomes, providing hands-on projects to enhance the lecture format. It was again noted that the course was taught in a wide variety of ways, although consensus on content was eventually reached. A binder of proven projects and writing assignments was assembled for each campus to better prepare adjunct instructors who teach the majority of sections. Instructors agreed to explore ways to better engage African-American students through projects based on culturally relevant artworks.

The relationship between the mean correct score and final grades reflected variables in weight given the assessment by instructors. Course grades were based on papers, critiques of art seen on museum visits and other criteria beyond tests. Both factors were discussed and it was agreed that a more uniform standard would be desirable. Faculty members agreed to a tighter range in LOA grade weight, and committed to improved participation.

Stage 4: Implementation of Course Revisions and Reassessment of Student Learning

The intervention chosen for Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 was a creative project (not a writing – based assignment) geared toward engaging students in a visual way. The intervention was designed to use students' own artistic interests as a springboard in responding to key concepts, allowing them to better process and retain these concepts. The LOA was administered in Fall 2007, in post-test format, to gauge effectiveness of the intervention projects, which were again modified upon discussion.

The assessment was then administered in Spring 2008, in pre-test /post-test format. 240 students participated across the three campuses. This represented 9 of the 10 sections of ARTS 104 conducted that semester. [158 student ID numbers were matched to demographic data.]

A significant increase was reflected in the overall mean scores (% correct) between the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 assessments. Despite an increase in mean scores at the Catonsville campus, from 65% to 69%, students there obtained lower scores than students on the Essex and Dundalk campuses which showed mean scores of 74% and 84% respectively. All male students showed a significant improvement in mean scores, with African-American male students increasing their mean score from 64% to 69%. Consistent with previous results, however, Caucasian students scored higher than African-American students. White females showed the greatest increase in mean scores with an increase from 70% to 78%, matched by males from the Other Ethnic Groups category who rose from 64% to 72%.

Students across all participating ARTS 104 sections continued to achieve higher scores on Objective 3: Key Artworks. However, there was an increase in scores for all three objectives according to item analysis for Spring 2008. College-wide, scores increased 5% for Understanding Concepts, 4% for Familiarity with Media, and 5% for Key Artworks.

Stage 5: Final Analysis and Results

Assessment results demonstrate that CCBC's ARTS 104: Art Appreciation provides a basis for students' understanding of art and especially for becoming familiar with key works of art. Outcomes assessment of the course provided a needed review of instruction and student evaluation across campuses. Through the pilot assessment and subsequent faculty discussion, a need for clarification of goals and standards was brought out. A single text was chosen for all campuses, an important positive result of the process.

Meetings geared toward sharing best practices and creative projects were helpful to full time and adjunct faculty alike. In fact, adjunct faculty taught most sections of ARTS 104, with those sections achieving higher scores than those of some full-time faculty. A binder created for each campus which contains successful projects and teaching strategies is an updatable resource for instructors. Initiation of hands-on projects and thematic assignments, already used by some faculty to enhance lecture format, did improve students' retention of concepts.

Recommendations:

- Support adjunct faculty teaching ARTS 104. Use binders (now in art office at each campus) for creative project ideas /examples proven effective through the assessment.
- Encourage informal meetings of instructors across campuses and intradepartmental communication to maintain standards and practice norms.
- Continue to improve student success through a thematic approach to core concepts.