

Rubrics for Assessing Information Competence in the California State University Prepared by the CSU Information Competence Initiative

Purpose:

Recent qualitative, performance-based library assessment efforts in the California State University system shed light on how students look for information, and what skills and abilities they use to formulate research questions, find, evaluate, and use information resources.¹ It is not uncommon for students to be satisfied with whatever information they find first, and “to go with what they know”, preferring to use search engines and websites over library portals, online catalogs, or subscription databases.

Evidence indicates that students have difficulty formulating a research question, do not make effective and efficient use of their time, are not aware of the wide variety of information choices and formats available to them, and do not systematically and critically evaluate the sources they do find. Students tend to use web-based electronic information sources found through search engines over other formats, placing more value on current electronic information sources than on more in-depth discussions often found in books or journal articles. In addition, it is not uncommon for students to guess when looking for information, rather than to demonstrate the ability to effectively use search techniques that directly fulfill an information need.

The purpose of these rubrics is to provide descriptions of performance-based guidelines which can help to distinguish between levels of student performance. In addition, the rubrics can be used

1. To define criteria for successful student learning of information competence principles.
2. To align content, instruction, and assessment to promote the learning of information competence principles based upon the *Information Literacy Competency Standards For Higher Education* (2000) published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).
3. To facilitate the diagnosis, evaluation, and improvement of student work using a common standard.
4. To foster and enhance partnerships between discipline and library faculty members

ACRL Standard	Beginning	Proficient	Advanced
1. Determine the Extent of the Information Needed	Student is unable to effectively formulate a research question based on an information need.	Student can formulate a question that is focused and clear. Student identifies concepts related to the topic, and can find a sufficient number of information resources to meet the information need.	Question is focused, clear, and complete. Key concepts and terms are identified. Extensive information sources are identified in numerous potential formats.

ACRL Standard	Beginning	Proficient	Advanced
2. Access the Needed Information Effectively and Efficiently	Student is unfocused and unclear about search strategy. Time is not used effectively and efficiently. Information gathered lacks relevance, quality, and balance.	Student executes an appropriate search strategy within a reasonable amount of time. Student can solve problems by finding a variety of relevant information resources, and can evaluate search effectiveness.	Student is aware and able to analyze search results, and evaluate the appropriateness of the variety of (or) multiple relevant sources of information that directly fulfill an information need for the particular discipline,
3. Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	Student is unaware of criteria that might be used to judge information quality. Little effort is made to examine the information located	Student examines information using criteria such as authority, credibility, relevance, timeliness, and accuracy, and is able to make judgments about what to keep and what to discard.	Multiple and diverse sources and viewpoints of information are compared and evaluated according to specific criteria appropriate for the discipline. Student is able to match criteria to a specific information need, and can articulate how identified sources relate to the context of the discipline.
4. Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose	Student is not aware of the information necessary to research a topic, and the types of data that would be useful in formulating a convincing argument. Information is incomplete and does not support the intended purpose.	Student uses appropriate information to solve a problem, answer a question, write a paper, or other purposes	Student is aware of the breadth and depth of research on a topic, and is able to reflect on search strategy, synthesize and integrate information from a variety of sources, draw appropriate conclusions, and is able to clearly communicate ideas to others

ACRL Standard	Beginning	Proficient	Advanced
5. Understand the Economic, Legal, and Social Issues surrounding the Use of Information, and Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally	Student is unclear regarding proper citation format, and/or copies and paraphrases the information and ideas of others without giving credit to authors. Student does not know how to distinguish between information that is objective and biased, and does not know the role that free access to information plays in a democratic society.	Student gives credit for works used by quoting and listing references. Student is an ethical consumer and producer of information, and understands how free access to information, and free expression, contribute to a democratic society.	Student understands and recognizes the concept of intellectual property, can defend him/herself if challenged, and can properly incorporate the ideas/published works of others into their own work building upon them. Student can articulate the value of information to a free and democratic society, and can use specific criteria to discern objectivity/fact from bias/propaganda.

Footnotes:

i. <http://www.csupomona.edu/~kkdunn/Icassess/ictaskforce.html>

Sources Consulted:

Big6 Associates, LLC. . *Rubric for Assessment: Integrated Problem Solving Model*. 2002.

Colorado Department of Education. *Rubrics for Assessment of Information Literacy*. December 1998.

North High School Library, Downers Grove, IL. *Research Process Rubric*. March 2002.

Prepared October 2002 by Dr. Ilene F. Rockman, Manager of the CSU Information Competence Initiative with input from CSU campus information competence librarians.