

PSY 331 Eagle Advantage SLO Assessment (Fall 2022)

Executive Summary:

This is a description of an assessment I completed in PSY331 in fall 2022. Specifically, I developed a reflective writing activity to give students practice articulating how the course helped them develop at least two different Eagle Advantage (EA) competencies relative to their future career goals. The assessment includes both indirect (see pp. 2-3) and direct (see p. 3) evidence of students' learning on APA Professional Development Goal 5.1 and APA Communication Goal 4.1.

Course Description and Relevant Learning Outcome:

PSY 331 is a lecture and lab-based course that meets four days/week and provides an introduction to experimental and other research methods as used in psychology. The emphasis is on the scientific method, techniques of data collection, and the principles and theories employed in the study of behavior and mental processes. The laboratory portion develops skills in observation, formulating research ideas and hypotheses, designing and conducting research, data analysis, and scientific report writing.

I taught this course for the first time in fall 2022. Prior to that, I participated in the Eagle Advantage Infusion Training in May 2022. As part of that training, I developed an Eagle Advantage-infused assignment where I required students to rate and describe how class activities and assignments helped them develop two EA competencies and how those skills were relevant to a future job or graduate program. My hope was that, with such deliberate practice, students would be able to see and articulate how course content/assignments were helping them develop transferable and marketable skills.

I used this assignment to assess the following course SLO:

“Recognize and articulate the relevance of course content and assignments in developing skills applicable to their future career goals” which is consistent with APA Professional Development Goal 5.1 (Apply psychological content and skills to career goals), and APA Communication Goal 4.1 (Demonstrate effective writing skills for different purposes)

Class Preparation and Assignment Description:

I included a statement in the syllabus (see Appendix, p. 5) and explained the EA competencies on the first day of class. I did not mention the EA competencies again until the last day of class. On the last day, I first facilitated a discussion centered around three open-ended questions: 1) *In your opinion, what is the value of a college education?*; 2) *What does it mean to have a college degree?*; and 3) *What should college students know or be able to do?* Students were instructed to think and jot down their answer individually, before we reconvened and shared-out during a whole class discussion. Afterwards, I summarized the work that led to the development of the EA competencies and provided students with a handout that summarized each one. Then I introduced the assignment (see Appendix, pp. 5-6), which consisted of four prompts/sections:

- 1) Students rated their current competency levels in each EA domain, using an 8-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all competent) to 8 (very competent).
- 2) Students rated the extent to which this course (PSY331, including content, discussions, activities and assignments) helped them grow/develop in each EA domain, using a 8-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (did not help at all) to 8 (helped a lot).
- 3) Students chose two EA competencies and explained *how* the course helped them develop in each area (incorporating specific examples of assignments or activities), and explained how each competency would be helpful/relevant to their desired career.

- 4) Students chose one EA competency they believed was still a “work in progress” and described two specific ways they would work on building that competency in their remaining time at UWL.

As a class assignment, students received full credit simply for participating and addressing all four prompts. Most students ($n = 8$) completed the assignment in the last 25 minutes of class, but 3 students didn’t finish and submitted it online later in the day, while 3 students were absent and completed the entire assignment outside of class.

As **indirect** assessment evidence, I computed average competency ratings for prompts 1 and 2, and thematic summaries of what they wrote about for prompts 3 and 4. As **direct** assessment evidence, I evaluated the quality of their responses for each competency discussed in prompt 3 using the following scale/rubric:

0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Not addressed	Underdeveloped	Developed	Exemplary
	competency is mentioned but examples of how developed and/or how it applies to future career are vague or unclear	competency is described along with a general description of how it was developed and/or how it applies to future career	competency is described along with clear and specific examples of how it was developed in the course and how it applies to future career

I also evaluated the quality of their response for prompt 4 using a similar scale/rubric:

0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Not addressed	Underdeveloped	Developed	Exemplary
	competency is identified but examples of how it will be developed are vague or unclear	competency is identified along with one clear and specific description of how it will be developed	competency is identified along with two clear and specific descriptions of how it will be developed

Thus, the total possible points students could earn on the direct assessment was 9. My goal for this assignment was a mean average performance of 80% to be indicative of proficiency. This criterion was chosen to be consistent with criterion levels for assessing learning outcomes described and reported in previous research/recommendations (e.g., Fuller & Fienup, 2018; Rosenshine, 2010).

Indirect Assessment Results:

EA Competency Ratings:

Table 1 presents a summary of students’ EA competency ratings for prompts 1 and 2.

On average, students rated themselves highest in Accountability ($M = 6.71$, $SD = .91$) and *Critical Thinking & Problem Solving* ($M = 6.36$, $SD = .84$), and lowest in *Digital Literacy & Technology* ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.11$), and *Career & Self Development* ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.34$).

As for the impact of the course, students indicated that it was most helpful for developing *Accountability* ($M = 6.79$, $SD = 1.48$) and *Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving* ($M = 6.79$, $SD = 1.05$), and least helpful for fostering *Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion* ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.36$) and *Collaboration* ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.59$).

Table 1
Summary of Student Ratings of Eagle Advantage Competencies

Prompt:		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
How would you rate yourself currently on each competency?			
	Adaptability	6.00	.78
	Collaboration	6.00	.96
	Communication	5.79	1.19
	Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving	6.36	.84
	Digital Literacy & Technology	5.39	1.11
	Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	6.14	1.79
	Accountability	6.71	.91
	Career and Self Development	5.57	1.34
To what extent did this course help you develop each competency?			
	Adaptability	6.21	1.19
	Collaboration	5.93	1.59
	Communication	6.50	1.16
	Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving	6.79	1.05
	Digital Literacy & Technology	6.64	1.08
	Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	5.36	1.69
	Accountability	6.79	1.48
	Career and Self Development	6.57	1.16

Note. $N = 14$

Reflective Writing Themes:

Table 2 presents the frequency values for how often each EA competency was written about.

Prompt 3: Students chose to write about a range of competencies they developed through the course (all were represented), but the most common was *Communication* ($n = 6$).

Prompt 4: Students most commonly described Career & Self Development ($n = 3$), *Digital Literacy & Technology* ($n = 3$), and *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* ($n = 3$) as areas that they would like to continue to improve upon. One student did not answer the prompt.

Table 2
Frequency of Eagle Advantage Competencies Mentioned in Reflective Writing Prompts

EA Competency	# of students who wrote about how developed in the course (prompt 3)	# of students who wrote about wanting to improve (prompt 4)
Adaptability	4	0
Collaboration	4	1
Communication	6	2
Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving	4	0
Digital Literacy & Technology	2	3
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	2	3
Accountability	4	1
Career and Self Development	2	3

Direct Assessment Results:

The average **total** score on students' written reflections was $M = 7.57$ ($SD = 1.37$) out of 9 possible points, or 84%. The range was 56-100%, and only three students scored lower than 80% overall.

- For prompt 3, the average score was $M = 5.36$ ($SD = .60$) out of 6 possible points (89%).
- For prompt 4, the average score was $M = 2.21$ ($SD = .99$) out of 3 possible points (74%)...but this value was negatively skewed by one student scoring "0" due to omission.

Reflection and Next Steps:

- Overall, students were able to successfully articulate how they developed EA competencies through specific activities and assignments in the course. They were also able to successfully explain how these skills applied to their potential future career, thus demonstrating their attainment of APA learning goals 5.1 and 4.1.
 - For the three students who did not individually meet the 80% benchmark, one was primarily because she did not address the fourth prompt, and the other two struggled with specificity in describing the class activities/experiences that prompted growth in the competencies, or how they would be applicable to a particular career.
 - In the future, to encourage more specificity, I may allow students time to brainstorm together, or I may assist by reminding them of all the major activities and assignments they completed in the course, which they could then choose to write about. I could also provide examples or feedback on a draft and prompt students to be more specific, as needed. The danger with these modifications is that students' responses may be less authentic.
- Students believed that the course was most helpful in developing *Accountability* and *Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving* skills, but all competencies were reflected in their *writing* about skills they developed in the course.
- Students rated the course as being least helpful in promoting *Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion* and *Collaboration*, but 6 students still wrote about how they developed those competencies in the course. Upon closer examination, these ratings had the highest amount of variance (SD = 1.69 and 1.59, respectively) and students still rated the course as being relatively helpful in these areas overall-- with respective ratings of 5.36 and 5.93 (out of 8).
- Taken together, the above findings support my assumption that the course had/has the potential to help in all of the EA competency areas, so I don't think I will prioritize some over others.
- While students rated themselves as lowest in the *Digital Literacy & Technology* and *Career & Self Development* competencies, they rated the course as being highly helpful in developing their skills in both areas, with ratings of 6.64 and 6.57 (out of 8) respectively. This suggests the course is helping to address students' perceived weaknesses.
- The most common competencies that students wanted to improve upon were *Career & Self Development*, *Digital Literacy & Technology*, and *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion*. With this in mind, I can make efforts to better incorporate them into future classes. Some ideas include:
 - Continuing to include an EA assignment such as this one, but possibly modify it by requiring students to incorporate the ideas directly into a resume or cover letter. Indeed, the original version of the EA assignment (i.e., the one I created in the EA Infusion training) required students to write a recommendation letter for themselves—but I ended up simplifying it given the timing of the semester (i.e., last day of class, when they were still working on the final research papers). I think adding a resume entry requirement to the current assignment might be a good way to make the career application stronger, without requiring a significant amount of additional writing.
 - Incorporating more digital literacy instruction, Currently, I teach students how to find research articles online and how to analyze data in SPSS via practice assignments and in doing their own projects. But I may add an additional SPSS practice assignment and/or recruit library liaisons or TAs to provide further instruction. They might also benefit from direct instruction on other programs and more basic computer literacy—as they some struggled with simple tasks I didn't anticipate, such as knowing how to save/access files on the lab computers.
 - Further emphasizing DEI when covering topics such as external validity, sampling, biases, and moderation. In the spring ('23), I will assess how well students explain and address sociocultural factors in the methods and discussion sections of their research papers.

APPENDIX: Eagle Advantage Assignment Materials

Syllabus Statement:

PSY331 and the Eagle Advantage

Whether you are planning to pursue a career in psychology or not, two of the primary goals of this course are to help you develop skills that you can apply to your future career, and to ensure you can articulate those skills to potential employers. The University has developed the [Early Advantage framework](#), which identifies eight competencies that employers have highlighted as being critical to success in the workforce: adaptability, collaboration & leadership, communication, critical thinking & problem solving, digital literacy and technology, engaging diversity, integrity & accountability, and self-management. Throughout the semester, you will engage with content, participate in activities, and complete assignments (including but not limited to a semester-long research project) that will help you develop skills across all of these domains. I will periodically highlight these connections as the course progresses, but I will also regularly encourage you to reflect on your learning as well. At the end of the semester, you will complete a reflection assignment which you formally connect your learning and experiences to the Eagle Advantage competencies.

Assignment:

Question 1:

As an undergraduate student, please rate yourself on the extent to which you are currently competent in each of the eight Eagle Advantage categories. (In other words, to what extent do you perceive yourself to possess these skills at this point in time?)

For each category, write the number that most applies using the scale below:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Not at all competent Very competent

- _____ 1 Adaptability
- _____ 2 Collaboration
- _____ 3 Communication
- _____ 4 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- _____ 5 Digital Literacy and Technology
- _____ 6 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- _____ 7 Accountability
- _____ 8 Career and Self Development

