

Fall 2019 CLA+ Mastery Results



Institutional Report

University of Wisconsin–La Crosse



cla+

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CLA+ has two primary uses. The first use is to provide overall evidence of students' competency in critical-thinking and written communication. The second use highlights these skills for individual students; CLA+ results provide a valuable tool for potential employers and graduate schools to ascertain the depth of a student's critical-thinking and written-communication skills. With CLA+ Career Connect, those results become accessible and actionable. CLA+ Career Connect gives students a leg up in today's competitive job market, enabling them to: post electronic badges verifying their performance to LinkedIn or other social networking profiles; attend exclusive career fairs with prominent employers; and feature their results on digital credential profiles.

CLA+ results are a powerful tool for assessing the critical-thinking and written communication skills of the students at your institution. University of Wisconsin–La Crosse's senior Total CLA+ score is **1208**. A score of 1208 signifies **Proficient** mastery of the skills measured by CLA+.

In addition to your students' CLA+ scores, key metrics contained in this report include Mastery Levels and subscores:

Mastery Levels

CLA+ Mastery Levels allow distinctions in student performance relative to students' proficiency in critical thinking and written communication. These levels contextualize CLA+ scores by interpreting test results in relation to the qualities exhibited by examinees. Each Mastery Level—Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced—corresponds to specific evidence of critical-thinking and written-communication skills.

CLA+ Subscores

In addition to total scores, there are six subscores reported across CLA+. The Performance Task—an essay-based section of the exam—is scored in three skill areas: Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, and Writing Mechanics. Students receive criterion-referenced subscores for each skill category based on key characteristics of their written responses. Selected-Response Questions are also scored in three areas: Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading and Evaluation, and Critique an Argument. These subscores are scored based on the number of correct responses that students provide.

Please see Sections 1–5 for a full set of institutional results.

In addition to your institutional results, your CLA+ institutional report includes a wide variety of information related to the measurement of higher-order thinking skills. Each section and appendix builds on the next to provide you with a full appreciation of how the CLA+ can support the educational mission at your school. The CLA+ institutional report's appendices include information to help you learn about CLA+ measurement, understand relevant statistical concepts, interpret your school's data, examine your performance in relation to performance at other CLA+ schools, and use CLA+ data to enhance student learning at your school.

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SECTION 1: SUMMARY RESULTS, BY CLASS**Number of Students Tested, by Class**

Freshmen: 100 Sophomores: N/A Juniors: N/A Seniors: 106

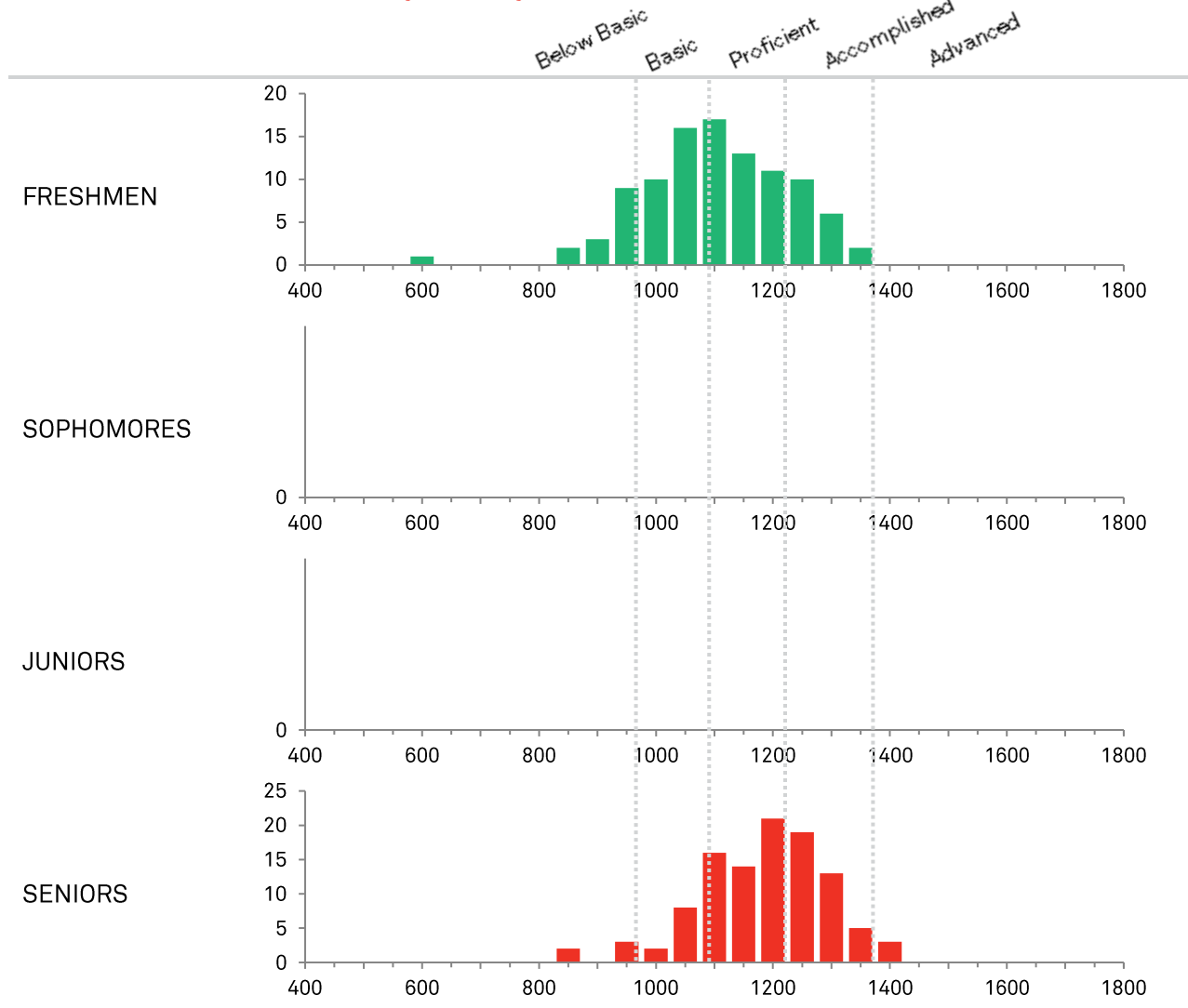
Summary CLA+ Results, by Class

		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION	25 TH PERCENTILE SCORE	75 TH PERCENTILE SCORE
TOTAL CLA+ SCORE	Freshmen	1127	124	1050	1230
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	1208	112	1136	1283
PERFORMANCE TASK	Freshmen	1086	170	976	1201
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	1181	162	1061	1276
SELECTED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS	Freshmen	1166	144	1080	1271
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	1243	132	1138	1340

University of Wisconsin–La Crosse has a senior Total CLA+ score of **1208**. The corresponding Mastery Level for this score is **Proficient**.

SECTION 2: DISTRIBUTION OF MASTERY LEVELS

Distribution of CLA+ Scores, by Mastery Level

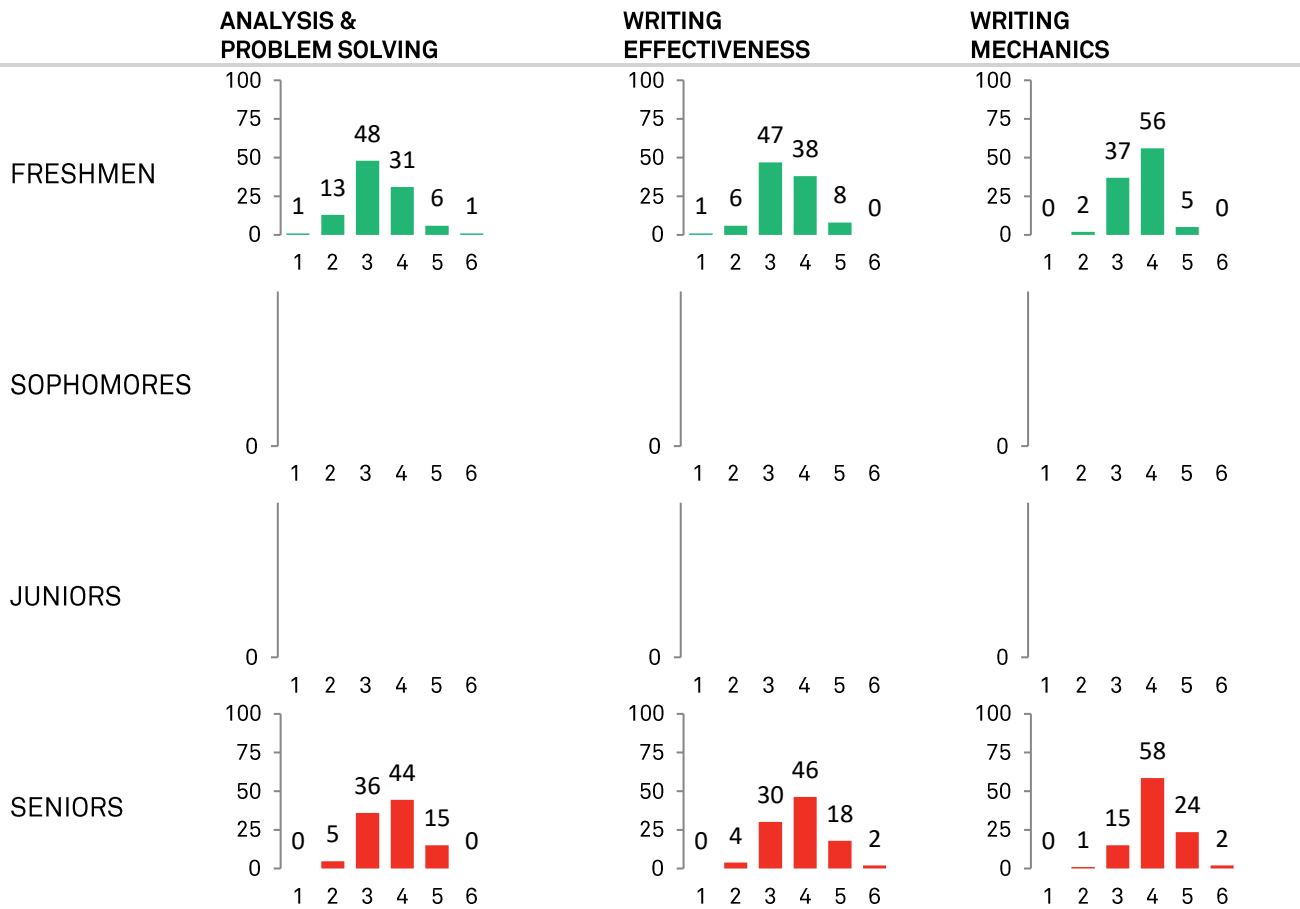


Mastery Levels, by Class

	MEAN TOTAL CLA+ SCORE	MEAN MASTERY LEVEL	PERCENT BELOW BASIC	PERCENT BASIC	PERCENT PROFICIENT	PERCENT ACCOMPLISHED	PERCENT ADVANCED
Freshmen	1127	Proficient	8%	31%	36%	25%	0%
Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Seniors	1208	Proficient	2%	12%	38%	42%	7%

SECTION 3: CLA+ SUBSCORES

Performance Task: Distribution of Subscores (in percentages)



NOTE: The Performance Task subscore categories are scored on a scale of 1 through 6.

Selected-Response Questions: Mean Subscores

	SCIENTIFIC & QUANTITATIVE REASONING			CRITICAL READING & EVALUATION			CRITIQUE AN ARGUMENT		
	Mean Score	25 th Percentile Score	75 th Percentile Score	Mean Score	25 th Percentile Score	75 th Percentile Score	Mean Score	25 th Percentile Score	75 th Percentile Score
FRESHMEN	569	509	625	543	508	596	545	498	598
SOPHOMORES	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
JUNIORS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SENIORS	604	561	650	564	508	616	576	528	610

NOTE: The selected-response section subscores are reported on a scale ranging approximately from 200 to 800.

SECTION 4: STUDENT EFFORT AND ENGAGEMENT

Student Effort and Engagement Survey Responses

How much effort did you put into the written-response task/ selected-response questions?

		NO EFFORT AT ALL	A LITTLE EFFORT	A MODERATE AMOUNT OF EFFORT	A LOT OF EFFORT	MY BEST EFFORT
PERFORMANCE TASK	Freshmen	1%	3%	36%	40%	20%
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	0%	2%	22%	44%	32%
SELECTED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS	Freshmen	0%	15%	43%	32%	10%
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	0%	10%	46%	29%	14%

How engaging did you find the written-response task/ selected-response questions?

		NOT AT ALL ENGAGING	SLIGHTLY ENGAGING	MODERATELY ENGAGING	VERY ENGAGING	EXTREMELY ENGAGING
PERFORMANCE TASK	Freshmen	9%	15%	32%	37%	7%
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	3%	12%	39%	40%	7%
SELECTED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS	Freshmen	12%	38%	33%	15%	2%
	Sophomores	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Juniors	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Seniors	9%	35%	40%	15%	1%

SECTION 5: STUDENT SAMPLE SUMMARY

Student Sample Summary

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC		FRESHMEN		SOPHOMORES		JUNIORS		SENIORS	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
TRANSFER	Transfer Students	--	--	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
	Non-Transfer Students	--	--	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	106	100
GENDER	Male	20	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24	23
	Female	78	78	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	78	74
	Decline to State	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4
PRIMARY LANGUAGE	English	93	93	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	103	97
	Other	7	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3
FIELD OF STUDY	Sciences & Engineering	34	34	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	27	25
	Social Sciences	8	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	25	24
	Humanities & Languages	9	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11	10
	Business	10	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24	23
	Helping / Services	30	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	18
	Undecided / Other / N/A	9	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
RACE/ ETHNICITY	American Indian / Alaska Native / Indigenous	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
	Asian (including Indian subcontinent and Philippines)	10	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0
	African-American / Black (including African and Caribbean), non-Hispanic	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
	Hispanic or Latino	5	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2
	White (including Middle Eastern), non-Hispanic	79	79	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	93	88
	Other	4	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2
	Decline to State	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3
PARENT EDUCATION	Less than High School	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
	High School	21	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10	9
	Some College	20	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	26	25
	Bachelor's Degree	33	33	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	49	46
	Graduate or Post-Graduate Degree	25	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	18
	Don't Know / N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1

APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTION TO CLA+

INTRODUCTION TO CLA+

In 2002, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) was introduced as a major initiative of the Council for Aid to Education (CAE). Since its launch, the CLA has offered institutions a value-added approach to the measurement of higher-order thinking skills. The carefully designed questions in this examination require students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information as they demonstrate their ability to think critically and solve problems. Hundreds of institutions and hundreds of thousands of students have participated in the CLA testing program to date.

Initially, the CLA focused on helping institutions estimate their contributions to the development of students' higher-order thinking skills. As such, the institution rather than the student was the primary unit of analysis. In 2013, CAE expanded this scope with the introduction of CLA+. This enhanced version of the examination provides useful and reliable information about educational growth at the student level as well as the institutional level. Other features new to CLA+ include subscores for scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical reading and evaluation, and critiquing an argument. The addition of mastery levels also supports the reporting of criterion-referenced results in relation to skill proficiency.

Beyond normative and growth-based results, CLA+ marks the introduction of flexible testing—where institutions can assess any cohort of students in any testing window and receive school-level reports summarizing their students' competency in critical thinking and written communication.

CLA+ includes two major components: a Performance Task (PT) and a series of Selected-Response Questions (SRQs).

The **Performance Task** presents students with a real-world situation that requires a purposeful written response. Students are asked to address an issue, propose the solution to a problem, or recommend a course of action to resolve a conflict. They are instructed to support their responses by utilizing information provided in a Document Library. This repository contains a variety of reference materials, such as technical reports, data tables, newspaper articles, office memoranda, and emails. A full PT includes four to nine documents in the library.

Students have 60 minutes to complete this constructed-response task.

In the second part of the examination, students are asked to answer 25 **Selected-Response Questions**. Ten questions measure scientific and quantitative reasoning, and ten measure critical reading and evaluation. Another five questions call for students to critique arguments by identifying logical flaws and questionable assumptions. Like the PT, the 25 SRQs are document-based and require students to draw information from provided materials. Students have 30 minutes to complete this section of the assessment.

CLA+ is a powerful assessment tool created to help teachers and students meet their educational objectives. The examination supports programmatic change, particularly in regard to higher-order thinking skills. It shows faculty members, school administrators, and other interested individuals the skill areas requiring attention on an institutional level to strengthen instruction and maximize learning. CLA+ also provides students with direct, formative feedback they can use to evaluate and reflect on their development on a personal level.

Educators may decide to consult their students' CLA+ results when making individualized decisions related to admission, placement, scholarships, or grading. Institutions may also wish to use CLA+ results to provide independent corroboration of competency-based learning, or to recognize students who have exhibited the higher-order thinking skills required for success in twenty-first century careers. Students may choose to share their results with potential employers or graduate schools as well to provide evidence of the skills they have acquired at their college or university. A single test cannot serve as the benchmark for all student learning within higher education, but there are certain skill areas deemed important by most educators across virtually all institutions. The higher-order thinking skills that CLA+ measures fall into this crucial category.

CLA+ allows institutions to benefit from a model of continuous improvement that positions educators as central actors in the relationship between assessment, instruction, and the learning process. Significantly, it provides educators with a frame of reference for determining the status of skill

achievement within their institutions. That said, CLA+ does not rank institutions; rather, it can identify opportunities for educational improvements. Similarly, CLA+ does not rank students but instead highlights areas where individuals excel or may need

to focus more effort. CLA+ is an instrument designed to make a meaningful contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning. In this respect, it is in a league of its own.

APPENDIX B: METHODS

CLA+ METHODOLOGY

CLA+ uses innovative questions and tasks to evaluate students' higher-order thinking skills. Each test form includes one Performance Task (PT) and 25 Selected-Response Questions (SRQs). The PT section measures three domains: analysis and problem solving, writing effectiveness, and writing mechanics. The SRQ section measures three domains as well: scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical reading and evaluation, and critiquing an argument, which involves the identification of logical flaws and questionable assumptions. Students have 90 minutes to complete the two sections of the assessment—60 minutes for the PT and 30 minutes for the SRQs.

Test results for CLA+ are delivered to institutions after administration windows have closed. Your institutional report presents scoring information for each section of the examination as well as total CLA+ performance for any freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors testing in a given window. The report includes analyses of the PT score, the SRQ score, and the Total CLA+ score.

PT and SRQ scores indicate the mean, or average, performance of all students who completed each section. PT mean scores are calculated by adding three raw subscores—for analysis and problem solving, writing effectiveness, and writing mechanics—and converting the sum using a

common scale. SRQ mean scores are also calculated by adding three raw subscores—for scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical reading and evaluation, and critique an argument—and converting this sum using a common scale. Total CLA+ scores are then calculated by averaging the PT and SRQ mean scores. For more information about the scaling process, please see Appendix H, *Scaling Procedures*.

In addition to mean scores, your report includes 25th and 75th percentile scores, which characterize the score values earned by 25% and 75% of your students, respectively. For example, a 25th percentile score of 974 for the total CLA+ would inform you that 25% of your students earned 974 or less. Similarly, a 75th percentile score of 1096 would let you know that 75% of your students earned 1096 or less. The values that fall between the 25th and 75th percentile scores thus tell you the score values earned by 50% of your students. To extend the previous example, the 25th and 75th percentile scores reported would let you know that 50% of your students earned Total CLA+ scores between 974 and 1096.

Finally, the institutional report contains mastery levels, which indicate the specific critical-thinking and written-communication skills exhibited by the students in your sample.

APPENDIX C: EXPLANATION OF YOUR RESULTS

This appendix provides guidance on interpreting the institutional results presented in sections 1–5 of your report. The sample of students analyzed in each table includes freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who tested in this window. To ensure that the results in your report are based on a consistent sample, your students must complete each section

of the assessment, including the Performance Task, the Selected-Response Questions, and the accompanying survey.

Please note that students designated for exclusion from analyses by your institution during registrar data submission will not be included in the sample.

SUMMARY RESULTS, BY CLASS (Section 1, page 2)

The first table in Section 1 of this report is titled **Number of Students Tested, by Class**. This table specifies the number of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors who your institution tested. Your sample size is based on these numbers and used when calculating results in all subsequent tables and figures of the report. Please note that very small samples (e.g., fewer than 100 students for any given class) should be interpreted with caution, as smaller sample sizes are less likely to provide reliable or representative results.

The next table, **Summary CLA+ Results, by Class**, presents a statistical overview of the students in your sample. It provides mean scores and quartiles for each class level tested. These results pertain to the test as a whole as well as to each section. Please

note that any class level not tested, or for which results are not applicable, is designated as “N/A” in this table and others throughout your report.

The Mean Score column lists the average scores for students in your sample. These scores are also considered your institutional CLA+ scores.

The 25th Percentile Score column indicates maximum score values earned by 25% of your students. Said another way, 25% of your students earned these score values or less. Similarly, the 75th Percentile Score column indicates maximum score values earned by 75% of your students. By comparing results in the 25th and 75th columns, you can determine the range in which 50% of your students scored.

DISTRIBUTION OF MASTERY LEVELS (Section 2, page 3)

Section 2 of your institutional report focuses on Mastery Levels, which are criterion-referenced indicators of performance new to CLA+. On individual reports, Mastery Levels are determined by students' Total CLA+ scores. On institutional reports, they are determined by each class level's mean Total CLA+ score.

There are four Mastery Levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Accomplished, and Advanced. Please see Appendix F, *Mastery Levels*, for a detailed description of these categories and the process through which they were derived.

Section 2 includes two tables related to Mastery Levels. The first, **Distribution of CLA+ Scores, by**

Mastery Level, contains a histogram of Total CLA+ scores for each class level that you tested, overlaid with Mastery Level cut score points. This chart shows how the distribution of CLA+ scores within your sample corresponds to student mastery of the skills measured by CLA+.

The second table provides a summary of **Mastery Levels, by Class**. The first column of data lists the Mean Total CLA+ score for each class tested, followed by the corresponding Mastery Level—the level at which the average student within your sample performed. The next five columns present the percentage of students that performed at each Mastery Level, by class.

CLA+ SUBSCORES (Section 3, page 4)

Your report includes Total CLA+ scores as well as scores for the Performance Task (PT) and Selected-Response Questions (SRQs). These section scores based on item type are further divided into subscores based on skill categories. The three subscores for the PT indicate performance in Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, and Writing Mechanics. The three subscores for the SRQs indicate performance in Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading and Evaluation, and Critique an Argument, which involves the identification of logical flaws and questionable assumptions.

The first table in Section 4 is **Performance Task: Distribution of Subscores (in percentages)**. The charts in this table indicate the distribution of subscores for each of the three skill categories by class level. The charts present the percentage of your students at each score value. Ranging from 1 to 6, each value is associated with a specific set of

response characteristics. For more information about the scoring rubric, please see Appendix E, *Scoring CLA+*.

The second table, **Selected-Response Questions: Mean Subscores**, provides summary statistics for the three skill categories measured in the SRQ section. The scores in this CLA+ section are determined by the number of correct responses and adjusted based on item difficulty. Each subscore is reported on a scale of approximately 200 to 800.

Mean Scores in this table reflect the average score received by each class for each of the three skill categories. The 25th Percentile Scores indicate the score values at or below which 25% of your students scored (again, by class level). The 75th Percentile Scores indicate the score values at or below which 75% of your students scored. By comparing results in the 25th and 75th columns, you can determine the range in which 50% of your students scored.

STUDENT EFFORT AND ENGAGEMENT (Section 4, page 5)

CLA+ ends with a set of survey questions, two of which are related to the assessment. One question asks students how much effort they put into completing the Performance Task (PT) and 25 Selected-Response Questions (SRQs). The other question asks students how engaging they found each section of the assessment to be. Students indicate their answers on a likert scale, ranging from “No effort at all” to “My best effort” and “Not at all engaging” to “Extremely engaging.” The table in

Section 5, **Student Effort and Engagement Survey Responses**, provides the percentage of students who selected each answer option by class level.

The survey questions are designed to help institutions consider the role that effort and engagement may play in student performance on CLA+. Survey results may also be consulted when evaluating the impact that recruitment efforts have on student motivation.

STUDENT SAMPLE SUMMARY (Section 5, page 6)

The final section of your institutional report includes a **Student Sample Summary**, which provides the number and percentage of students within your sample who meet various characteristics. These characteristics include: transfer status, gender, primary language, field of study, race or ethnicity,

and parent education level. Transfer status is reported by participating institutions during the registrar data collection process. All other demographic characteristics are provided by students as part of the post-assessment survey.

APPENDIX D: CLA+ TASKS

INTRODUCTION TO CLA+ PERFORMANCE TASKS AND SELECTED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

CLA+ includes one Performance Task (PT) and 25 Selected-Response Questions (SRQs). All items are administered online. Each PT consists of an open-ended prompt that asks students to provide a constructed response. Every SRQ presents students with four options and asks them to choose a single answer. The SRQs are further organized into three sets, each focusing on a different skill area.

Questions that appear on CLA+ call on students to use critical-thinking and written-communication skills as they perform cognitively demanding tasks. The integration of these skills mirrors the requirements of serious thinking and writing faced outside of the classroom.

OVERVIEW OF THE CLA+ PERFORMANCE TASK (PT)

Each PT asks students to answer an open-ended question about a hypothetical yet realistic situation. The prompt requires students to integrate analytical reasoning, problem solving, and written-communication skills as they consult materials in a Document Library and use them to formulate a response. The library includes a range of informational sources, such as letters, memos, summaries of research reports, newspaper articles, maps, photographs, diagrams, tables, charts, and interview notes or transcripts. Each PT is typically accompanied by four to nine documents, and students have 60 minutes to prepare their responses.

The first screen of each PT contains general instructions and an introduction to the scenario. The second screen is split. On the right side, students have a list of the informational sources in the Document Library. By using the pull-down menu, they can select and view each document. On the left side of the screen, students can read the question in the PT and enter their response in a field that has no word limit. An example of the split screen is shown on the following page.

Each PT assesses a unique combination of skills—no two are exactly the same. Some PTs ask students to identify, compare, and contrast the strengths and limitations of alternate hypotheses, points of view, courses of action, etc. Other PTs ask students to review a collection of materials and choose amongst a set of options to solve a problem or propose a new solution to the problem. Still other PTs ask students to suggest or select a course of action that resolves conflicting or competing strategies and to provide a

rationale for their decision, explaining why one approach is better than another. For example, students may be asked to anticipate potential difficulties or hazards associated with different ways of addressing a problem, propose likely short- and long-term consequences of these strategies, and defend one or more of these approaches.

PTs require students to utilize higher order thinking skills, more specifically, to

- recognize information that is relevant and not relevant to the task at hand;
- analyze and understand data in tables and figures;
- evaluate the credibility of various documents;
- distinguish rational arguments from emotional ones;
- determine the difference between fact and opinion;
- identify questionable or critical assumptions;
- deal with inadequate, ambiguous, or conflicting information;
- spot deception, possible bias, and logical flaws in arguments;
- identify additional information that would help resolve issues;
- weigh different types of evidence;
- organize and synthesize information from several sources; and
- marshal evidence from different sources in a written response.

To view a sample PT, please visit the Sample Tasks section of CAE's website at www.cae.org/cla.

The screenshot shows the CLA+ (Task 1) interface. At the top, it says "cla+ (Task 1)" and "1 of 1 59 min 54 sec". The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, under the heading "Concluding Essay", there is a task description: "Your task is to write a report evaluating Dr. Greer's claim that 'reducing cell phone usage while driving motorized vehicles would lower the city's vehicle-related accident rate.' Dr. Greer uses the chart in Document B to support his statement. Make sure to address the strengths and/or limitations of Dr. Greer's position and support your statement with information found in the documents." Below this, there are two paragraphs of instructions: "There is no 'correct' answer. Your report should clearly describe all the details necessary to support your position. Your answers will be judged not only on the accuracy of the information you provide, but also on how clearly the ideas are presented, how thoroughly the information is covered, how effectively the ideas are organized, and how well your writing reflects the conventions of standard written English." and "While your personal values and experiences are important, please write your response solely on the basis of the information provided above and in the Document Library. Type your response in the space provided. Write as much as you need to fulfill the requirements on the task; you are not limited by the size of the response area on the screen." Below the instructions are "Copy" and "Paste" buttons and a large text input area. On the right, under the heading "Select document:", there is a dropdown menu showing "Document Library Contents" selected, with "Document 1: Stoneville Police Department Data" and "Document 2: Dr. Greer's Chart" listed below it. Below this is a section titled "Document Library Contents" with "Document 1 Stoneville Police Department Data" and "Document 2 Dr. Greer's Chart" listed. At the bottom of the interface, there is a "HELP" button on the left and "BACK" and "NEXT" buttons on the right.

Preview of the Performance Task Document Library

OVERVIEW OF THE CLA+ SELECTED-RESPONSE QUESTIONS (SRQs)

Like the PT, the 25 SRQs measure an integrated set of critical-thinking skills. Students utilize these skills to answer three sets of questions. The first measures scientific and quantitative reasoning, the second measures critical reading and evaluation, and the third (critique an argument) measures students' ability to identify logical fallacies and questionable assumptions. This final set requires students to detect logical flaws and questionable assumptions. Also like the PT, each question set is document-based and includes one to three informational sources of varying natures. Students are instructed to use these materials when preparing their answers within the 30 minutes provided.

The first two question sets require students to draw on the information and arguments provided in accompanying materials. Each set contains 10 questions, for a total of 20 questions.

Supporting documents for the **Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning** set discuss real-life research results. To answer questions in this section, students must apply critical-thinking skills that include

- making inferences and hypotheses based on given results,
- evaluating the reliability of information (such as experimental design or data collection methodology),
- identifying information or quantitative data that is connected and conflicting,
- detecting questionable assumptions (such as implications of causation based on correlation),
- supporting or refuting a position,
- drawing a conclusion or deciding on a course of action to solve a problem,
- evaluating alternate conclusions, and
- recognizing when a text has open issues that require additional research.

Supporting documents for the **Critical Reading and Evaluation** set present debates, conversations, and literary or historical texts with opposing views on authentic issues. To answer questions in this section, students apply critical-thinking skills that include

- supporting or refuting a position,
- analyzing logic,
- identifying assumptions in arguments,

- evaluating the reliability of information,
- identifying connected and conflicting information, and
- making justifiable inferences.

In the **Critique an Argument** set, students are presented with a brief argument about an authentic issue and asked to analyze the argument. To answer the five questions in this section, students must apply critical-thinking skills that include

- evaluating the reliability of information, including potential biases or conflicts of interest;

- detecting logical flaws and questionable assumptions;
- addressing additional information that could strengthen or weaken the argument; and
- evaluating alternate conclusions.

To view sample SRQs, please visit the Sample Tasks section of CAE's website at www.cae.org/cla.

ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

CAE has a team of experienced writers who work with educational researchers and editorial reviewers to generate ideas and design carefully constructed performance tasks (PTs), selected-response questions (SRQs), and supporting documents. Each group contributes to the development and revision of these materials.

PT Development

Throughout development, writers, researchers, and reviewers refine materials to ensure that each PT can support a variety of different approaches. The prompt must be sufficiently focused to guide students purposefully while providing them with the flexibility to demonstrate independent thinking. Questions must further be structured so students need to analyze and evaluate multiple sources of information from the Document Library to draw conclusions and justify their arguments.

Accompanying documents must present information in various formats and text types (e.g., tables, figures, news articles, editorials, emails, etc.). They must also provide enough information for students to formulate a number of reasonable arguments in response to the prompt. To achieve these goals, the development team drafts and revises a list of the intended content within each document. The list is used to check that each piece of information is clearly provided in the documents and that unwanted information is not embedded. During the editorial process, information is added and removed from the documents to ensure that students can reach approximately three to four different conclusions. Typically, some conclusions are better supported by available evidence than others.

The document list also serves as a starting point for scorer training and is used in alignment with analytic descriptions in the PT scoring rubrics. After several rounds of revisions, the most promising PTs are

selected for piloting. During this stage, student responses are examined to identify any lack of clarity in the prompt or any unintentional ambiguity or unuseful information in the accompanying documents. After revisions are made, PTs that meet expectations by eliciting a full range and variety of responses become operational.

SRQ Development

The development process for SRQs is similar to the one used for PTs. Writers create documents that are based on real-life data and topics and can support questions measuring higher-order thinking skills. When crafting these documents, writers present valid and invalid assumptions and conclusions, devise alternate hypotheses and conclusions, incorporate flawed arguments, and leave some issues intentionally unanswered. These characteristics serve as a foundation for the creation of SRQs.

When reviewing item sets, editors work with writers to confirm that correct answer options are in fact correct based on information provided in the documents. Editors and writers also ensure that incorrect answer options are not potentially plausible. Throughout this process, the development team also checks to make sure that questions assess the intended critical-thinking skills.

After several rounds of revision, the most promising SRQs are selected for piloting. During this stage, student responses are examined to identify any errors or lack of clarity in questions and answer options. Responses are also reviewed to check whether accompanying documents contain unintentional ambiguity or unuseful information. After revisions are made, SRQs that function well—questions that are of appropriate difficulty and that effectively discriminate between high- and low-performing students—become operational.

APPENDIX E: SCORING CLA+

SCORING CRITERIA

Student responses to **Performance Tasks** are scored in three skill areas: Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, and Writing Mechanics. Students receive criterion-referenced subscores for each skill category based on key characteristics of their written responses. These characteristics are described in detail within the Performance Task rubric, available on CAE's website at www.cae.org/claptrubric.

Selected-Response Questions are scored based on the number of correct responses that students

provide. Each of three question sets represents a skill area: Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning (10 questions), Critical Reading and Evaluation (10 questions), and Critique an Argument (5 questions). Because some question sets may be more difficult than others, the subscores for each category are adjusted to account for these differences and reported on a common scale. See Appendix H, *Scaling Procedures*, for more information about the scaling process.

THE SCORING PROCESS

During the piloting of **Performance Tasks (PTs)**, all student responses are double-scored. Human scorers undertake this process, and the documentation they assemble is later used to train more scorers and program the machine-scoring engine for operational test administrations.

CAE uses a combination of human and automated scoring for its operational PTs. Student responses are scored twice: once by a human scorer and once by the Intelligent Essay Assessor (IEA). This automated scoring engine was developed by Pearson Knowledge Technologies to evaluate textual meaning, not just writing mechanics. Using a broad range of CLA+ student responses and human-generated scores, Pearson has trained the IEA to evaluate CLA+ PTs in a manner that maintains consistency between human and automated scoring.

The rigorous training that candidates undergo to become certified CLA+ scorers further promotes the validity and reliability of the scoring process. Training sessions include an orientation to the prompts, scoring guides, and rubrics; extensive feedback and discussion after the evaluation of each student response; and repeated practice grading a wide range of student responses.

To ensure the continuous calibration of human scorers, CAE has also developed the E-Verification system for its online scoring interface. This system calibrates scorers by having them evaluate previously-scored responses, or "Verification Papers," throughout the scoring process. Designed to improve and streamline scoring, the E-Verification system periodically substitutes student responses

with Verification Papers. These papers are not flagged for the scorers, and the system does not indicate when scorers have successfully evaluated them. However, if a scorer fails to assess a series of Verification Papers accurately, that scorer is targeted for additional coaching in a remediation process or is permanently removed from scoring.

Each student response receives three subscores in Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, and Writing Mechanics. The subscores are assigned on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). Blank responses or responses unrelated to the task (e.g., what a student had for breakfast) are flagged for removal from test results.

Students also receive three subscores for the **Selected-Response Questions (SRQs)**, one for each of the sets, which measure Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading and Evaluation, and Argument Critique. Unless a student fails to start the section or is unable to finish due to a technical glitch or connection error, any unanswered SRQs are scored as incorrect. However, if a student does not attempt at least half of the SRQs, the student will not receive a score for the section. Subscores are determined by the number of correct responses, adjusted based on item difficulty, and reported on a common scale. The adjustment ensures that scoring is consistent, for example, whether a student answers seven questions correctly in an easier set or six in a more difficult one. Scores are equated so that each subscore category has the same mean and standard deviation and all test forms are comparable. Score values range from approximately 200 to 800 for each SRQ section.

APPENDIX F: MASTERY LEVELS

SETTING STANDARDS FOR CLA+

Following the creation of CLA+, a standard-setting study was conducted to establish fair and defensible levels of mastery for the new and improved assessment. This formal study was held at CAE headquarters in New York City on December 12, 2013. Twelve distinguished panelists, representing a variety of educational and commercial sectors, were invited to participate. The table below lists each panelist.

During the standard-setting study, panelists defined descriptions of three mastery levels: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. A fourth level, Accomplished, was added in November 2014 using the same methodology and the same panelists. Panelists' discussions were based on the CLA+

scoring rubric as well as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform well on CLA+. The purpose of this activity was to develop consensus among the judges regarding each mastery level and to create a narrative profile of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for CLA+ students.

During subsequent rating activities, panelists relied on these consensus profiles to make item performance estimates. Judges broke into three groups of four, and each group evaluated characteristics related to one mastery level. The groups then reconvened and reported their findings to the group at large so they could form final consensus on student performance at each of the mastery levels.

CLA+ Standard-Setting Study Participant List and Institutional Affiliation

PARTICIPANT	INSTITUTION
Aviva Altman	Johnson & Johnson
Jon Basden	Federal Reserve
Mark Battersby	Capilano University (Canada)
Paul Carney	Minnesota State Technical and Community College
Anne Dueweke	Kalamazoo College
Terry Grimes	Council of Independent Colleges
Sonia Gugga	Columbia University
Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi	California State University System
Rachel L. Kay	McKinsey & Company
Michael Poliakoff	American Council of Trustees and Alumni
Elizabeth Quinn	University of Wisconsin–La Crosse
Paul Thayer	Colorado State University

CLA+ MASTERY LEVELS

CAE uses outcomes from the 2013 standard-setting study to distinguish between CLA+ students with varying knowledge, skills, and abilities as measured by the assessment. On individual reports, Mastery Levels are determined by students' Total CLA+ scores. On institutional reports, they are determined by each class level's mean Total CLA+ score.

Institutions should not use mastery levels for purposes other than the interpretation of test

results. If an institution wishes to use the attainment of CLA+ mastery levels as part of a graduation requirement or the basis for an employment decision, the institution should conduct a separate standard-setting study with this specific purpose in mind.

The following table summarizes each level of mastery and provides a description of students below the basic level of mastery.

Student Levels of Mastery Profiles

LEVEL OF MASTERY	PROFILE
BELOW BASIC	Students who are below basic do not meet the minimum requirements to merit a basic level of mastery.
BASIC	<p>Students at the basic level should be able to demonstrate that they at least read the documents, made a reasonable attempt at an analysis of the details, and are able to communicate in a manner that is understandable to the reader. Students should also show some judgment about the quality of the evidence.</p> <p>Students at the basic level should also know the difference between correlation and causality. They should be able to read and interpret a bar graph, but not necessarily a scatter plot or comprehend a regression analysis. Tables may be out of reach for basic students as well.</p>
PROFICIENT	<p>Students at the proficient level should be able to extract the major relevant pieces of evidence provided in the documents and provide a cohesive argument and analysis of the task. Proficient students should be able to distinguish the quality of the evidence in these documents and express the appropriate level of conviction in their conclusion given the provided evidence. Additionally, students should be able to suggest additional research and/or consider the counterarguments.</p> <p>Proficient students have the ability to correctly identify logical fallacies, accurately interpret quantitative evidence, and distinguish the validity of evidence and its purpose. They should have the ability to determine the truth and validity of an argument. Finally, students should be able to know when a graph or table is applicable to an argument.</p>
ACCOMPLISHED	<p>Students at the accomplished level of mastery should be able to analyze the information provided in the documents, extract relevant pieces of evidence, and make correct inferences about this information. Accomplished students should be able to identify bias, evaluate the credibility of the sources, and craft an original and independent argument. When appropriate, students will identify the need for additional research or further investigation. They will refute some, but not all of the counterarguments within the documents and use this information to advance their argument. Accomplished students also have the ability to correctly identify logical fallacies, accurately interpret and analyze qualitative and quantitative evidence (e.g., graphs and charts), and incorporate this information into their argument. Students will be able to correctly identify false claims and other sources of invalid information and integrate this information in their responses.</p> <p>Student responses are presented in a cohesive and organized fashion. There may be infrequent or minor errors in writing fluency and mechanics, but they will not detract from the reader's comprehension of the text.</p>
ADVANCED	<p>Students at the advanced level demonstrate consistency, completeness, and show a command of the English language in their response. They have a level of sophistication that is not seen in the proficient or basic levels. Advanced students create and synthesize the provided evidence, are comfortable with ambiguity, are able to structure their thoughts, understand causality, add new ideas, and introduce new concepts in order to create or seek new evidence. They think about conditions and nuances and express finer points and caveats by proposing a conditional conclusion.</p> <p>The students at this level display creativity and synthesis, while understanding the finer points in the documents. For example, advanced students will be able to synthesize the information across multiple documents and address the ambiguities in the data that are presented, such as outliers and knowing how sample size affects outcomes. Advanced students will also be able to identify and highlight gaps in logic and reasoning.</p>

APPENDIX G: DIAGNOSTIC GUIDANCE

INTERPRETING CLA+ RESULTS

CLA+ test results can be used to evaluate an institution's overall performance on tasks measuring higher-order thinking skills. Test results can also be used to determine an individual student's areas of relative strength and weakness.

Examining performance across both CLA+ sections can serve as a comprehensive diagnostic exercise since the combination of necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities differs for the Performance Task (PT) and the Selected-Response Questions (SRQs). The PT measures Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, and Writing Mechanics, while the SRQs measure Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading and Evaluation, and Critique an Argument (the detection of logical flaws and questionable assumptions).

SRQ subscores are assigned based on the number of questions answered correctly; this value is then adjusted to account for item difficulty, and the adjusted value is converted to a common scale. Established in relation to the test performance of freshmen in the fall of 2013, the scale has a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. SRQ subscores thus range from approximately 200 to 800.

PT subscores are assigned on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). Unlike the SRQ subscores, PT subscores

are not adjusted for difficulty. These subscores remain as is because they are intended to facilitate criterion-referenced interpretations. For example, a score of "4" in Analysis and Problem Solving signifies that a response has certain qualities (e.g., "Provides valid support that addresses multiple pieces of relevant and credible information..."). Any adjustment to the score would compromise this interpretation.

The ability to make a claim such as, "Our students seem to be doing better in Writing Effectiveness than in Analysis and Problem Solving," is clearly desirable. These types of observations can be made by comparing the distributions for each subscore in Section 3 of your institutional report (specifically, on page 4). Please examine these test results in combination with the PT scoring rubric as well, available on CAE's website at www.cae.org/claprubric.

CLA+ Mastery Levels further contextualize PT and SRQ subscores by interpreting test results in relation to the qualities exhibited by examinees. Each Mastery Level corresponds to specific evidence of critical-thinking and written-communication skills. Please see Appendix F, *Mastery Levels*, for detailed information about each Mastery Level.

COMPARING RESULTS ACROSS ADMINISTRATIONS

One way to assess institutional performance is to track changes in CLA+ test scores over time. This goal can be achieved by testing a cohort of students longitudinally or by participating regularly in cross-sectional CLA+ administrations.

The CLA+ assessment format differs from that of its predecessor, the CLA. Therefore, direct score comparisons are not feasible for test data collected before and after fall 2013. However, scaling equations can be used to adjust CLA scores for the purpose of making comparisons with CLA+.

Schools wishing to relate current CLA+ test results to CLA results in previous years can use the following equation, derived by comparing the CLA and CLA+ total scores from 132 institutions that tested students on both forms of the assessment ($r=0.881$):

CLA scores from fall 2010 – spring 2013:

$$score_{CLA+} = 204.807 + (0.792 \cdot score_{CLA})$$

CLA scores from before fall 2010:

$$score_{CLA+} = 212.908 + (0.673 \cdot score_{CLA})$$

APPENDIX H: SCALING PROCEDURES

CONVERTING CLA+ SCORES TO A COMMON SCALE

To provide CLA+ scores, CAE converts SRQ subscores and PT and SRQ section scores to a common scale of measurement.¹ This process allows us to combine score values from different assessment tasks and to compute mean scale scores for each CLA+ section. The process also lets us calculate a total average scale score for the examination based on performance within both sections.

For each **Performance Task (PT)**, raw subscores (for the three skill categories) are added to produce a raw section score. Because some PTs are more difficult than others, the raw section score is then converted to a common scale of measurement. The conversion produces scale scores that maintain comparable levels of proficiency across performance tasks and test forms. So, for example, a CLA+ scale score would indicate the same percentile rank regardless of the task a student received.

For the PT, CAE uses a linear transformation when converting raw scores to scale scores. The process creates a scale score distribution for CLA+ freshmen that has the same mean and standard deviation as their combined SAT Math and Critical Reading (or converted ACT) scores. The transformation was defined using data from college freshmen who took CLA+ in fall 2013. This type of scaling preserves the shape of the raw score distribution and maintains the relative standing of students. For example, the student with the highest raw score on a PT will also have the highest scale score for that task; the student with the next highest raw score will be assigned the next highest scale score, and so on.

This scaling practice ensures that a very high PT raw score (not necessarily the highest possible score) corresponds approximately to the highest SAT (or converted ACT) score earned by a freshman testing in fall 2013. Similarly, a very low PT raw score would be assigned a scale score value close to the lowest SAT (or converted ACT) score earned by a freshman taking CLA+ in fall 2013. On rare occasions when students earn exceptionally high or low raw PT scores, their scale scores may fall outside the

normal SAT Math and Critical Reading score range of 400 to 1600.

For the **Selected-Response Questions (SRQs)**, raw subscores (for the three skill categories measured by the three question sets) are determined based on the number of correct responses. These raw subscores are first equated and then placed on a common scale. This process adjusts the subscores based on the difficulty of the item sets so the subscores have the same mean and standard deviation across all question sets. Comparisons can then be made across test forms.

Using a linear transformation, CAE then converts the equated subscores to a more interpretable scale with a mean of 500 and standard deviation of 100, again, based on data from freshmen taking CLA+ in fall 2013. This scale produces SRQ subscores ranging from approximately 200 to 800, similar to the subsections of the SAT.

The weighted average of the SRQ subscores is then transformed again, using the same scaling parameters as the PT. As before, the process creates a scale score distribution for CLA+ freshmen that has the same mean and standard deviation as their combined SAT Math and Critical Reading (or converted ACT) scores. The transformation is based on data from college freshmen who took CLA+ in fall 2013. The application of common parameters places both CLA+ section scores on the same scale.

Finally, CLA+ **Total Scores** are calculated by taking the average of the two CLA+ section scores. Thus, students who do not complete or provide scorable responses for both sections of the assessment do not receive Total CLA+ scores.

¹ Again, PT subscores are not adjusted because they support criterion-referenced interpretations based on the use of a scoring rubric.

APPENDIX I: PERCENTILE LOOKUP TABLES

PERCENTILE LOOKUP TABLES FOR CLA+ SCORES

For schools interested in the distribution of CLA+ performance, CAE provides percentile tables that list scores for total CLA+, as well as each section of the examination (PT and SRQs) and EAA, all associated with a percentile value.

These tables are available on CAE's website. Institution-level percentile scores can be found at

www.cae.org/clapluschoolpercentiles, and student-level percentile scores can be found at www.cae.org/claplusStudentpercentiles.

The tables currently only contain data for entering freshman and exiting seniors. Additional class levels will be added as sufficient samples are attained for calculating percentile rankings for each group.

APPENDIX J: STUDENT DATA FILE

EXPLORING STUDENT DATA

In tandem with your institutional report, CAE provides a CLA+ Student Data File, which gathers content from three sources: CLA+ scores and identifiers computed by CAE, academic data and demographic information provided by your registrar, and self-reported information from your students' CLA+ online profiles and post-assessment surveys. Each piece of data in the spreadsheet is identified as a separate variable.

The Student Data File contains information identifying each student and the test administrations being reported. Here, you will also find testing times and a full range of scoring information, such as Performance Task (PT) subscores and section scores, Selected-Response Question (SRQ) subscores and section scores, and Total CLA+ scores. Other scoring information includes performance levels and percentile ranks for each section and the test as a whole, overall mastery levels, and Entering Academic Ability (EAA) scores.

The data file provides student grade point average and demographic information as well, including student responses to new survey questions regarding how much effort they put into each CLA+ section and how engaging they found these sections to be. Student responses may help contextualize individual scores and institutional results. These responses may also help schools identify motivational issues within participant groups, so schools can adjust their outreach and recruitment methods for future administrations.

Local Survey is a tool that allows institutions to add as many as nine questions of their own to the post-assessment survey. If an institution uses the Local Survey feature within the CLA+ testing platform,

responses to these questions will also appear in the Student Data File. The set of combined questions allows schools to create a richer, customized collection of data to facilitate institutional research using CLA+.

You may link the student-level information in this file with other data you collect—for example, from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), or from local portfolios, assessments, or studies of course-taking patterns, specialized program participation, etc. The gathered information can help you hypothesize about a range of factors related to institutional performance.

Student-level scores were not originally designed to serve a diagnostic purpose at the individual level. However, with the advent of CLA+, these scores have greater utility. Student-level results can now be used for formative purposes, to identify areas of weakness for individual students and to help determine performance issues across participant groups. Schools may analyze the performance of student subgroups to determine whether certain students may benefit from targeted educational enhancements. Value-added scores may be estimated for these subgroups as well and compared to growth estimates across the institution.

Starting with the fall 2013 administration, student-level CLA+ results can now be compiled from year to year, yielding a larger and much richer data set than one gathering results from a single academic year. Student data aggregated across years will allow schools to track performance longitudinally so they can identify improvements in critical thinking and written communication made by their students.

APPENDIX K: MOVING FORWARD

WHAT NEXT?

The information presented in your institutional report is designed to help you better understand the contributions your school has made toward student learning. Yet, the report alone provides only a snapshot of student performance. By combining it with other tools and services that CLA+ has to offer, the institutional report can become part of a powerful evaluation and enrichment strategy. It can help you and your school target specific areas of improvement and align teaching, learning, and assessment effectively to enhance student performance over time.

We encourage institutions to examine CLA+ performance closely and review the results carefully with their educators. Schools can extend these analyses by linking student-level CLA+ outcomes with other data sources and pursuing in-depth sampling. Collaboration with peer schools and participation in professional development opportunities can support institutions and their educators further by showing how research findings can inform teaching practices and help improve student learning.

Using your Student Data File, you can relate student-level CLA+ results to data you collect on course-taking patterns, grade achievement, and other topics of inquiry. CLA+ subscores in Analysis and Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness, Writing Mechanics, Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Reading and Evaluation, and Critique an Argument can contribute to analyses of portfolios, student surveys, and other sources by helping you focus on specific areas that may benefit from improvement. Internal analyses conducted through in-depth sampling can help you generate hypotheses and develop a basis for additional research.

CLA+ can offer peer group comparisons, but the true strength of peer learning comes through collaboration. CAE facilitates cooperative

relationships among CLA+ schools by encouraging the formation of consortia. Moreover, CAE hosts web conferences that periodically feature campuses engaged in promising work with CLA+.

CAE also provides workshops geared toward helping institutions maximize the utility of their Student Data Files. In these sessions, CAE researchers work with institutional staff, showing them ways to dig deeper into student results so they can answer questions about performance on CLA+ and identify areas of strength or weakness. To reserve one of these sessions for your institution, please email clateam@cae.org.

Finally, our professional development services shift the focus from assessment outcomes to pedagogical tools in Performance Task Academies. These two-day, hands-on training workshops offer faculty members guidance in the creation of their own performance tasks. Modeled on the structure of CLA+ tasks and designed to support the teaching objectives of individual courses, faculty-developed tasks can be used as classroom exercises, homework assignments, or even local-level assessments. To learn more about Performance Task Academies, please consult the Events page on the CAE website (www.cae.org).

In all these ways, we encourage institutions to explore a system of continuous improvement driven by the diagnostic potential of CLA+. When used in combination, our programs and services reinforce the belief that institutions must connect teaching, learning, and assessment in authentic and meaningful ways to strengthen and advance their students' higher-order thinking skills.

Without your contributions, CLA+ would not be on the exciting path it is on today. We thank you for your participation and look forward to your continued involvement!



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