Developing Competency-Based Advising Practices in Response to Paradigm Shifts in Higher Education

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Competency-based programs have gained prominence in recent years for two primary reasons. First, more students are seeking ways to apply nonclassroom learning experiences toward a degree. Second, a paradigm shift in higher education encourages postsecondary curriculum developers to accept nonclassroom experiences as demonstrations of skills and competencies and to adapt curriculum to include these experiences. Educators must realize that the traditional classroom learning necessary to earn credits toward graduation must also apply to life outside academe and must reflect student experiences. Like educators in the classroom, advisors must respond to this change in perspective through inquiry-based practices and democratic relationships with students.

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Competency-based programs have existed alongside credit-bearing course work in various disciplines, particularly teacher preparation programs and medical schools, for many years; however, they are becoming increasingly prominent and widespread among various academic programs in higher education, particularly honors programs, that focus on competency development. According to The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative report, competency is defined as "a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task" (Jones & Vorhees, 2002, p. 1). As early as 2001, Voorhees argued that society was experiencing a "learning revolution" and that "the bridge between the traditional paradigm, which depends on traditional credit hour measures of student achievement, and the learning revolution can be found in competency-based approaches" (p. 5). Crawford (2015) noted that an increasing number of students, particularly those who identify with special populations such as nontraditional-aged and online learners, thrive in a self-paced and project-based environment. This observation, among others, has contributed to an increase in competency-based academic programs.

Due to the increased numbers of U.S. academic programs moving toward direct-assessment degrees that do not rely on credit hours, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions recently created a common framework for assessing and approving competency-based degree programs (Fain, 2015b). Institutional leaders are determining ways to adapt the educational structure of their institutions for nontraditional students and those who had previously started a degree program. Many, such as those at Weber State University and Utah Valley University, are trying to determine ways that prior learning and competency-based instruction coincides with college credit for work experience (Jacobsen, 2015). The rise of competency-based academic programs forces higher education professionals, including both teaching faculty members and advisors, to work together to enhance classroom learning and academic advising for students.

The number of institutions with leadership currently exploring or creating a competency-based education program has dramatically increased in the past year. According to Fain (2015a), approximately 600 colleges fit this profile, an increase from 52 institutions in the previous year. However, lack of information on effective models places limitations on creating high-quality competency-based education programs (Fain, 2015b). By increasing the awareness of effective competency-based education models, such as the one discussed in this article, and exploring ways to ensure high-quality student learning in these models, advisors can serve as key stakeholders in the development of effective competency-based programs.

Competency-based programs incorporate students' attainment and construction of knowledge and skills through experiences both within and outside of the classroom. As these initiatives become more widespread and higher education faculty members, advisors, and administrators continue to find ways to individualize learning for all students, everyone must learn about effective advising models to use in competency-

based programs. The potential for competency-based advising is explored through a focus on honors students, a special population for whom competency-based programs are growing increasingly important.

Regardless of the institution, honors programs provide a unique learning environment that may include individualized, project-based, and self-paced learning; small class sizes; and opportunities for reflection and active problem solving outside the classroom. Honors programs frequently pioneer new pedagogies or place students into situations outside of their comfort zones. As a result of these innovative approaches, honors programs nationwide are taking the lead in incorporating competency-based or experiential-learning approaches into the curricula (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2014).

Honors programs focus on teaching skills such as leadership, citizenship, service, research, and global awareness that cannot be fully learned and practiced through a curriculum based solely on credits. Because they embrace competency-based learning, honors programs employ advising models useful for adaptation to other special student populations.

Successful Advising Models and Practices in Competency-Based Programs

Proactive Advising

Proactive advising, formerly known as *intrusive advising*, is a practice in which "the advisor purposefully becomes involved with the student from both academic and holistic perspectives" (Varney, 2013, p. 139). In terms of academics, advisors assist students in moving forward with individual course and degree completion in a timely manner. They also assist students in developmental aspects of the college experience, such as adjusting to college life, maintaining mental health, and coping with the stress and anxiety created by college courses and adult concerns.

Historically, proactive advising was associated with students identified as at risk for attrition due to poor high school grades, low placement test scores, or other factors (Varney, 2013); however, due to unique and sometimes logistically challenging academic requirements, some honors programs feature proactive advising. For example, students in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, must earn anywhere between 8 and 14 credits of Honors courses, depending on the student's prior education and experiences, and demonstrate competency requirements in leadership, research, and global citizenship through an electronic portfolio. Therefore, both the advisor and the student must thoroughly know the individual plan of study, which is determined by various factors, including the student's life experiences and knowledge level, major, and experience outside of the classroom, including that offered by service learning or practicum opportunities.

Students can identify and employ unique pathways to achieve their competency requirements and choose the electronic portfolio platform through which to demonstrate their achievement. As a result, the advisor needs to "develop a solid and comprehensive understanding of the institutions and the resources available to students," which constitutes a main strategy of proactive advising (Varney, 2013, p. 145).

Inquiry-Based and Developmental Advising

Advising within a competency-based program is driven by inquiry; that is, advisors want students to acknowledge their own unique strengths and goals as well as identify the best ways for them to develop their skills. Competency-based advising includes negotiated agreement and inquiry processes; that is, competency-based advising is characterized by a democratic relationship through which the advisor and student solve problems together rather than an authoritative relationship through which the advisor prescribes a course of action or gives advice in the form of an imperative.

Inquiry-based advising corresponds with developmental advising, first described and advocated over 40 years ago. In 1972, Crookston (1972/1994/2009) and O'Banion (1972/1994/2009) put forth different perspectives that established "a dichotomy and continuum along which the advising process could be viewed" (Grites, 2013, p. 47). According to Crookston, developmental academic advising facilitates growth with a focus on academic advising as teaching, which perpetuates a learning process. In contrast, prescriptive advising is based on giving information in an authoritative manner. Moreover, "Crookston also emphasized the importance of the negotiated agreement between students and advisors in which learning, that is, growth, change, or development, is the outcome" (Grites, 2013, p. 47).

Crookston (1972/1994/2009) contrasted prescriptive and developmental advising with 12

dimensions, one of which is rewards. Crookston articulated that prescriptive advising rewards students with "grades, credit, and income" whereas developmental advising rewards them with "achievement, mastery, acceptance, status, recognition, and fulfillment" (1994, p. 14). I suggest adding *competency* to the latter listing.

Advisors within competency-based initiatives, such as those featured in honors programs, need to take an inquiry-based and developmental, rather than a prescriptive, advising approach. This requires advisors to learn more about each individual student and identify resources that capitalize on a student's strengths. As competency-based programming expands around the nation, U.S. higher education institutions need to provide appropriate resources to make inquiry-based advising a reality for all students.

Advisors, using a developmental approach, can help students develop competencies through experiential learning, characterized by learners engaging and reflecting on activities outside of the classroom (Kolb, 1984). All college students, not just honors students, can thrive through developmental advising and experiential learning, which addresses their unique life experiences, academic passions, and career goals. Indeed, within the larger academic advising community (outside of honors programs), the principles of developmental advising—summarized as "a) a *developmental view* that implied growth as an outcome; b) *academic advising as teaching* that articulated the learning process in which students and advisors become engaged; and c) *prescriptive* advising . . ." (Grites, 2013, p. 47)—continue to be utilized in various forms. The developmental advising approach can and should be cultivated within competency-based models. To capitalize on this trend of learning and teaching, advisors and administrators need to find ways to implement developmental advising in various settings across campuses.

Advising-as-Teaching Model

In addition to proactive and developmental advising approaches, the advising-as-teaching model applies to competency-based education. Crookston (1972/1994/2009) pointed out similarities between the functions of advising and classroom teaching, noting that both are concerned with "facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (1994, p. 12). The advising-as-teaching model is based on democratic relationships between students and advisors, characterized by developmental advising, which should provide the cornerstone of advising in competency-based programs.

Elements of a good lesson plan are reflected in a productive advising appointment. Drake (2013) used a scenario of a student seeking to withdraw from the institution to demonstrate that both classroom teaching and advising are based on clear objectives, standards of performance, anticipatory set, input, modeling, check for understanding, guided practice, closure, and independent practice (pp. 26–30). These criteria, in one form or another, indicate an effective lesson plan that identifies measurable learning outcomes and uses specific instructional strategies to teach students how achieve that outcome.

To implement effective advising-as-teaching practices, advisors must know and utilize educational theories and pedagogical models, including Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives, Erikson's (1959) stages of identity development, and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. These and other foundational frameworks of education should inform the teaching and advising that help students meet their educational objectives.

Proactive, inquiry-based, and developmental models complement the advising-as-teaching model in that all offer key aspects of competency-based advising. Effective advising models remain relevant despite paradigm shifts in higher education, and adjustments in advising models should be grounded in appropriate and practical application of theory.

A Successful Model: The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato

The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, offers a successful model of competency-based education and advising practices based on strong and defined correlations between skills, abilities, and demonstrations of competency (Voorhees, 2001). Following Voorhees's (2001) model, educators, including advisors, help students develop skills, abilities, and knowledge through the learning experiences that are featured in many honors programs, such as innovative courses, international opportunities, undergraduate research positions, internships, and other types of experiential education (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2014).

At Minnesota State University, Mankato, honors students integrate their experiences over time and consider their development through intentional reflection. The students demonstrate their achieved competency through an electronic portfolio by clearly articulating their learning about each competency—leadership, research, and global citizenship—throughout their time in college and explaining the ways they might use that knowledge to achieve their future personal, academic, or professional goals. According to Voorhees's (2001) definitions, competencies are "the result of integrative learning experiences in which skills, abilities, and knowledge interact to form learning bundles that have currency in relation to the task for which they are assembled" and demonstrations are "the results of applying competencies" (p. 9).

Educators can assess students' demonstrations of competency in a variety of ways through both formative and summative assessments. A portfolio can be used as a formative assessment throughout a student's college experience or as a summative assessment at the conclusion of a student's program (Corley & Zubizarreta, 2012). The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, has been successful in assessing students' competency development over time at both the formative and summative levels through electronic portfolios, which serve as capstone projects that students must successfully defend to faculty members to complete the program. This summative assessment replaces the formal research paper, or thesis, required in many traditional honors programs.

Alumni of the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, stated that their electronic portfolio was the most valuable project they completed during their college career because it enabled them to articulate their experiences in a job or graduate school interview in a way that shows they learned about a life skill—leadership, research, or global citizenship—over the course of four years. Although it might include elements from various courses or life experiences, the portfolio, unlike a transcript, provides a potential employer or graduate school with detailed information about the student's experiences, course work, and subsequent learning.

Because the electronic portfolio and competency-based model are completely embedded within the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the advising model within the program has been adapted to guide students toward program and degree completion in addition to competency development. Four main resources are utilized in an academic advising session to help the student articulate and work with an honors advisor to plan for further competency development: learning plan, electronic portfolio annual assessment, three competency rubrics, and individual plan of study (see Appendices). These features of the advising cycle align with the inquiry-based and developmental advising models most appropriate for a competency-based program.

Key Pieces of the Advising Cycle

Each fall, students submit a learning plan (Appendix A), which enables them to set short-term goals for the year in each of the three competency areas: leadership, research, and global citizenship. Also, in their learning plan, students articulate the ways they will demonstrate achievement of these goals in their electronic portfolio. Students are not penalized if they progress in their competency through a different means than initially identified. The learning plan document is intended as a goal-setting exercise. According to Filip (2010), short-term goals can motivate individuals to achieve reasonable objectives. The act of setting a realistic short-term goal also "requires a true understanding of your current situation" (Filip, 2010, p. 13). Honors students at Minnesota State University, Mankato, need to understand their current point in competency development to complete an effective and manageable learning plan.

Students can determine their current point of competency development via self-assessment and reflection. In addition to student self-assessment, Honors Program faculty members and staff provide a formal method of assessment on an annual basis. They review each student's electronic portfolio during one week in June and provide students with detailed feedback (Appendix B). The reviewer remarks inform students about their current state of competency development and offer suggestions for moving forward in the following year. In theory, these suggestions help students create learning plans in the fall.

Faculty members and staff use the competency rubrics (Appendix C) as benchmarks during the electronic portfolio assessment. Specifically, they rely on documented reflection to measure the students' understanding of their experiences. The extent of their understanding, as evidenced through student reflection, may indicate that

students will use the skill in the future. If a student does not demonstrate gained knowledge from the experience, then the reviewers do not mark the description of the knowledge level on the rubric. For example, a student who served as a leader in an organization but does not express any learning about group settings or teamwork may not have benefited optimally from the experience. Also, honors faculty and staff interpret an omitted description of a student's reflection on a documented on-campus activity as a sign that the student has not fully considered the value or outcome of the experience. In this case, despite the involvement in a learning opportunity, the student fails to reach the adequate competency level as documented and evaluated in the e-portfolio. Advisors use the rubrics to address any shortcomings with the student.

Two faculty or staff members read each student's electronic portfolio and may discuss with each other the appropriate level to mark on the rubric. Students receive these assessments in the summer immediately following the portfolio review and again in the fall before they submit their learning plans. The electronic portfolio review and feedback cycle embodies the Crookston-inspired (1972/1994/2009) advising-as-teaching model and other inquiry-based methods of advising. By prompting students to articulate the reasons for their involvement and the ways they developed skills and competencies from the experience, rather than merely listing their abilities, the electronic portfolio assessment contributes a consistent and necessary aspect of advising in competency-based programs.

The competency rubrics (Appendix C) are valuable tools for reviewers of electronic portfolios. They are also intended to benefit students as they consider their experiences and reflect on their learning. By unpacking the language of the rubrics, instructors and advisors help students understand the differences between knowledge levels as they self-assess their competency development. Students understand the rubrics and utilize them as guidance throughout their undergraduate years as a resource to help them meet the goals of the program. Instructors and advisors encourage students to ask frequent questions about the rubrics, providing a key element of the democratic and inquiry-based learning process in the classroom setting.

The faculty members, staff, and students in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, have found that well-crafted rubrics serve as helpful tools for many reasons (see Walters, 2014). The competency rubrics were created with the input of faculty members and staff from across the campus as well as student representatives from the Honors Student Council and are revisited frequently. Advisors refer to them in appointments so that students can see the relationship of the rubric to various aspects of their honors experience, including course work, electronic portfolio development, and their broader campus experience.

Each honors student develops an individualized plan of study (Appendix D), which is stored both in an electronic and paper advising file for access by program staff. In the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the individualized plan, the key outcome for the standard advising appointment, is considered in the context of a student's competency development. Honors courses help students develop their competencies, and students can move through the program differently without a requirement checklist. Individualized plans of study hold the advisor and student accountable and record a student's previous progress and potential future course work.

The ideal advising cycle follows:

- At the beginning of fall semester, students draft a personal learning plan, usually in consultation with an advisor.
- Throughout the fall semester, students meet with an advisor and identify ways to achieve the goals in that plan.
- Throughout the remainder of the academic year, students engage in experiences upon which they reflect. They subsequently describe their learning in their e-portfolio, which is submitted for review at the end of May. Faculty and staff review is undertaken the first week of June.
- Students absorb and reflect on the assessment provided by the faculty reviewers. At the beginning of the fall semester, students consider this feedback when creating their learning plan. At this point, the advising cycle begins again.

In an ideal world, all students complete the cycle at least once annually; however, special circumstances necessitate flexibility in this cycle. Extenuating circumstances are handled on a case-by-case basis by the student and the honors faculty and staff.

Discussion

The typical prescriptive advising appointment consists of a student with questions and an advisor with answers. The student's questions might relate to facts: "What courses do I need to complete to graduate on time?" "Can I have an access code to register for next semester?" "How do I change my major?" Under a prescriptive approach, the advisor responds with specific information such as a list of courses, a code number, or a handout on procedure. However, in a competency-based program that encourages and invites inquiry-based learning and developmental advising models, the questions and answers create opportunities for deeper and broader reflection. Rather than simply conveying information to the students, advisors in competency-based programs strive to engage students with questions that motivate them to apply classroom concepts to the outside world, reflect intentionally on their learning, and draw connections between courses and their future careers or personal goals. Competency-based programs necessitate an advising cycle rather than a continuum or a road map. Instead of helping students travel from point A to point B, advisors in competency-based programs help each student figure out the best path from point A to point B. For this reason, the concept of a cycle is immensely important in contextualizing advising within a competency-based program.

The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, illustrates one model of an advising cycle; however, a paradigm applicable to all circumstances does not exist. The complete cycle as well as the stopping points and the tools that students utilize are based on competencies identified by the program and the student population. High-achieving students need different types of prompting than students struggling academically or placed on probation, entering an upper division as undecided, or studying in a particular field. Leaders of each program need to determine a model that works for their advisors and their students.

Best Practices

Communication. Advisors in each program need to identify the most effective and efficient ways to communicate their competency-based model to students, especially because the complex learning it inspires can overwhelm students. For some advisees, the principles may seem counter-intuitive because of their prior experiences in the prescriptive K-12 environment, which provides few choices. As a result, students may feel intimidated or confused by the competency-based approach. Academic advising—as the process by which students learn of the curriculum requirements necessary to complete a degree—has evolved, and current trends in higher education, such as competency-based programs, drive continuing changes in advising. Advisors using a developmental and inquiry-based advising model in a competency-based program focus on helping students identify learning experiences, articulating knowledge gained from these experiences, and brainstorming ways to build on and expand the experiences and learning in the future. This method of advising encourages a student to consider course content and engage with experiences in different ways than standard educational practices. Advisors using a competency-based approach must be prepared to explain the model to students in multiple ways (e.g., visually, verbally) and provide examples for students in different disciplines or careers.

The competency-based model may be new to other educators, so advisors need to establish a way to communicate the model to faculty members and staff on campus who use differing advising approaches and emphases. For example, a veteran advisor may need to point out to a new hire that a first-semester college student may not readily grasp discipline-specific language.

Revision. The rubrics, advising sheets, learning plans, and other tools will need redevelopment as programs grow and evolve. As student demographics change, the ways in which student development is assessed might change too. The program revisions come out of conversations with various stakeholders, including students, faculty members, staff, and administrators. In the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, these stakeholders form the Honors Council with representatives from each college, administrative faculty members, and staff members from key units.

The annual portfolio review often stimulates conversation about the effectiveness of rubrics and advising models. Advisors must remain receptive to the many ideas presented in these discussions and advocate for a thoughtful, well-informed process for incorporating revisions.

Adaptation and access. Competency-based programs often resemble the puzzle used to teach children that round pegs do not fit in square holes. That is, program planners often must find ways to adapt within frustrating confines of educational structures and models. As a result, the creators of

competency-based programs must demonstrate both patience and flexibility. In this way, students from various backgrounds and disciplines must be able to access the program. At the same time, the program must maintain consistency in mission, goals, and learning outcomes. Although the path to the end goal may be changed to accommodate individual differences, every student must meet the specific goals and demonstrate the determined skill sets to maintain the integrity and credibility of the program. Finding and maintaining the balance between individualized plans toward a goal with common end results present the most challenging aspects of a competency-based program.

Summary

While competency-based programs are not new, the debate over their use has escalated in recent years. If the advising community addresses ways to enhance advising in competency-based programs, then advisors must accept competency-based education as a valid, reliable, and valuable model of learning. The Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, demonstrates successful competency-based learning and advising. A need for improvements, revisions, and adjustments characterize any model, and the competency-based program can lead to successful student learning through advising.

The key drawback to the competency-based approach is the need for intensive and consistent advising. Advisors must meet frequently with students to answer questions, explain feedback, and monitor progress. The process encourages student questions, and the answers differ for each student. The best competency-based programs are individualized based on each student's life experiences, academic disciplines, and future professional and personal goals; therefore, the best advising is also individualized.

Universities with competency-based programs must prepare for the workload created and the resources required for successful outcomes. Practitioners need limited caseloads that enable them to effectively advise without being overwhelmed. The higher education community must recognize that the potential for competency-based education can only come to fruition if appropriate resources are provided and maintained to ensure student success.

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Appendix A. Sample learning plan

Name: Sarah Honors Student
Year: Sophomore
Field: Biology (Pre-medicine)
Second Language: Spanish
My Personal Learning Plan for the 2014-2015 academic year includes the following goals and activities.

1. Leadership
   - I will develop my leadership skills by planning an event on my floor in the residence hall. I hope that the seminar will help me to develop my global leadership values and my ability to work across cultures and within a team.
     - *Demonstration*: I expect to demonstrate the skills that I have developed through a short, reflective essay about the experience and what I learned from it.
   - I will also develop my leadership skills by running for office in my sorority.
     - *Demonstration:* I will provide evidence that I ran for office. If elected, I will provide an assessment of my leadership abilities from the sorority advisor.
2. Research
   - I will develop my research skills by completing a research paper in an Honors Composition course.
     - *Demonstration:* I will submit the completed paper and my professor's analysis as evidence of my ability to exhibit information literacy skills and my ability to synthesize and integrate ideas.
   - I will begin to search for a faculty mentor for my undergraduate research project.
     - *Demonstration:* I will meet with the Director of the Undergraduate Research Center and will reflect upon what I have learned in a brief journal entry.
3. Global Citizenship
   - I will continue developing my second-language ability in Spanish by completing Spanish 201.
     - *Demonstration:* Evidence of successful completion of Spanish 201 and reflection on what I have learned.
   - I will learn to use Sociology to identify other social conditions that different people experience.
     - *Demonstration:* Research paper developed in Honors Social Problems class along with reflection on what I learned in this project.
   - I will learn more about at least one ethnic minority population living in my state by attending culture nights or lectures at X, when available.
     - *Demonstration:* Short journal entry on my experiences at the culture nights.

Appendix B. E-folio evaluation form

E-FOLIO EVALUATION FORM

Last Name:_____ First Name:_____

Year: Freshman

I. WELCOME PAGE

☐Able to view welcome screen without scrolling
☐Text and photos are related
☐Presents introductory message
☐Personal mission statement is displayed
☐Easily navigable
☐Links to Honors-related material
☐Displays a logical organization style
☐Demonstrates correct writing mechanics
☐Maintains a professional tone

II. E-FOLIO ORGANIZATION COMMENTS

III. E-FOLIO PROGRESS

IV. LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

VALUES: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
TEAMS: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
CURRENT PERFORMANCE:
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE:

V. RESEARCH COMPETENCY

RUBRIC LEVEL

INFORMATION LITERACY: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
INFO SYNTHESIS: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
ORIGINAL RESEARCH: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
CURRENT PERFORMANCE:
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE:

VI. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP COMPETENCY

RUBRIC LEVEL

LANGUAGE: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
CULTURE: ☐ LEVEL 1 ☐ LEVEL 2 ☐ LEVEL 3 ☐ LEVEL 4
CURRENT PERFORMANCE:
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE:

Note. Spacing adjusted for publication. Adequate space is provided for detailed responses.

Appendix C. Competency rubrics

Competency Assessment Rubrics

In June, representatives of the honors staff and faculty review the e-folios and learning plans of students enrolled in the Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Based on guidelines created throughout the academic year, the staff and faculty members evaluate the level of student work in regard to each competency. To gauge student development, the evaluators use the following competency rubrics as guidelines. To graduate with honors, all students must demonstrate competencies at the level indicated by the asterisks. The shading represents levels of experience per year, with first-year represented with the lightest shade and last year represented by the darkest shade. Nonshaded areas reflect optional ways of demonstrating competency.

Leadership

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to utilize personal leadership values and guide groups toward a common goal.

		Rubric			
		Emerging	Developing		Mastering
Theme	Leadership Competency	Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Values	Students will identify and utilize leadership values as members of campus and community organizations	Identifies personal leadership values	Reflects upon personal leadership strengths and weaknesses	Critiques leadership models or style(s) within group contexts	Uses personal theories and values of leadership within campus or community organizations*
Teams	Students will identify roles within teams and utilize them within campus or community organizations	Identifies various types of roles within group and team settings	Reflects upon roles within group and team settings	Practices group member skills and abilities to work together toward a common goal	Articulates a general leadership philosophy to guide future collaboration within groups*

[In the leadership rubric grid, the shading gets incrementally darker by column indicating that the student gains greater competency over time. Specifically, for both themes of values and teams, the Level 1 leadership column features the lightest shade, indicating a first-year emerging competency, and the Level 4, mastering competency column for values and teams, is the darkest. In the middle of the table, the Level 3 developing competency column is darker than the Level 2 developing competency column.]

Appendix C. Competency rubrics (cont.)

Research

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit information literacy skills, synthesize and integrate ideas, produce original research or creative works, and contribute to their knowledge base.

Theme	Research Competency	Rubric			
		Emerging	Developing		Mastering
		Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Information Literacy	Student will exhibit information literacy skills	Develops ability to access information effectively, efficiently, and critically	Demonstrates knowledge of the ethical use of information	Develops ability to evaluate and incorporate selected information into knowledge base	Demonstrates ability to use information effectively and ethically to accomplish a specific research goal*
Information Synthesis	Student will exhibit the ability to synthesize and integrate ideas	Develops ability to organize others' ideas	Develops ability to evaluate and synthesize diverse perspectives on a given topic	Exhibits ability to draw upon multiple sources to present a coherent and integrated thesis statement or hypothesis	Demonstrates ability to reflect upon how the paper/project led to new knowledge and understanding about the research process*
Original Research	Student will produce original or creative achievement	Identifies research or creative proposal that extends knowledge or practice of the selected disciplines	Develops research question or creative proposal that extends knowledge or practice of the selected disciplines	Conducts primary research or engages in creative practice that extends the knowledge or practice of the selected disciplines	Exhibits completed research or creative work that extends knowledge or practice of the selected disciplines*
Dissemination of Results	Student will contribute to knowledge	Identifies appropriate venues for dissemination	Prepares and submits an abstract or proposal for the appropriate venue	Disseminates the results of research or creative achievement*	Publishes the results of research or creative achievement through a peer-reviewed venue

[According to a predictable pattern in the research competency rubric, the lightest shading appears in the cells of the first row and left-hand column and the darker shades appear in the lower rows and right-hand columns. The first row shows the lightest shade for the emerging and developing literacy columns. In this row, the next darker shade appears in the mastery cell. In the second row, the cell for the emerging level of information synthesis features the lightest shade, but the cells for the two developing levels are darker. The next darkest shade is featured in the mastery level of the second row and extends to column 3 on original research through Level 3. The darkest shade appears for mastery of research and Levels 1 through 3 of row 4, dissemination of results. The mastery of dissemination cell is not shaded.]

Appendix C. Competency rubrics (cont.)

Global Citizenship

Upon graduation, honors students will have demonstrated the ability to exhibit second language and communication competencies as well as cultural competency and awareness.

Theme	Global Citizenship Competency	Rubric			
		Emerging	Developing		Mastering
		Level One	Level Two	Level Three	Level Four
Language	Student will exhibit second language and communication competence	Uses self-assessment to identify language competency	Exhibits growth in second language competency	Achieves ACTFL intermediate mid (or intermediate low) competency**	Demonstrates ability to tolerate ambiguity and negotiate meaning through language
Culture	Student will exhibit cultural competency and awareness	Identifies basic concepts related to global citizenship and cultural competency	Uses discipline-specific concepts to identify other social conditions and cultural realities	Evaluates social conditions and cultures through engaged interactions*	Expresses ability to explain perspective of another society or culture

*Minimum demonstration for graduation with honors

**Students who continue study of a language from high school must demonstrate ACTFL [American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages] intermediate–midlevel competency; those who begin studying a new language must demonstrate intermediate–low competency.

[The global citizenship grid features the lightest shade for both emerging-level competencies in language and culture (rubric column 1) as well as developing competency Level 2 for language (rubric column 2). The next darkest shading is featured for Level 3 language and Level 2 culture (rubric columns 2 and 3), and the darkest shade appears only for Level 3 culture. Mastery level cells for language and culture are not shaded, indicating optional demonstration for undergraduates.]

Appendix D. Student plan of study

Honors Program Plan of Study		
Student Name:_____ **Date:** _____ **Year:**____		
Honors General Education Courses		
Name of Course:		**Credits:**
Total Credits Satisfied		
Honors Seminars		
Name of Course:		**Credits:**
Total Credits Satisfied		
Language		
Courses Completed:		
Language Competency Satisfied:	☐ **YES**	☐ **NO**
Plan to satisfy language competency:		
Suggestions for Fulfilling Honors Requirements:		

Note. Spacing adjusted for publication. Adequate space provided for detailed responses.