Executive Summary

The Assessment Office, Institutional Learning Objectives Implementation Committee, and the General Education Office at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) gathered faculty in July 2014 to establish institutional-level performance expectations for UH Mānoa seniors in the area of ethical reasoning (as a form of critical thinking). Performance expectations were needed because UH Mānoa faculty had never answered the question, “What level of performance is good enough?” This project answered that question for seniors near graduation.

In carrying out this project, the Assessment Office followed accepted practices in setting performance expectations which include assembling a group of knowledgeable stakeholders (in this case, UH Mānoa faculty), holding an orientation and training session, and facilitating a discussion of participants’ rationales related to student performance and exit-level expectations. In addition, as a recommended practice, the Assessment Office obtained feedback from participants regarding the session itself and whether they felt they were adequately trained to set the performance expectations.

Assessment Office faculty specialists facilitated the session in which 19 faculty members from different departments set the performance expectations based on a locally developed rubric. The participants established the average scores needed for students to meet UH Mānoa’s expectations for seniors near graduation.

**Ethical Reasoning Performance Expectations:**

- Identifies ethical issue(s) = 2.4 score or higher¹
- Deliberates responsibly using ethical tools, processes, and/or frameworks = 2.3 score or higher¹
- Forms sound ethical judgments = 2.4 score or higher¹

In future institutional-level assessment projects, these performance expectations will be used as the “cut scores”: students at or above the scores will be deemed as “meeting expectations.” The results of the future projects will be reported in the aggregate; no individual student or professor will be identified (e.g., a future report might say, “80% of a representative sample of UH Mānoa seniors met the performance expectations in ethical reasoning”).

To assist with program-level assessment, the Assessment Office will distribute the performance expectations and examples of student work that “meets” and “does not meet expectations” to program assessment coordinators for their consideration. Programs may establish higher performance expectations for their students.

¹ On a 0-4 point scale, with 4 being the highest score, on the Contemporary Ethical Issues rubric (Appendix A).
Session Report

1. Purpose and Use of Results

As part of implementing UH Mānoa’s institutional learning objectives for undergraduates, the Assessment Office, Institutional Learning Objectives Implementation Committee, and General Education Office held a standard setting session to set performance expectations in the area of ethical reasoning (as a form of critical thinking). The “performance expectation” takes the form of an average score on a rubric. In institutional-level assessment, students whose work receives an average score at or above the minimum expected score are considered meeting UH Mānoa’s expectation for seniors near graduation. In future institutional-level assessment projects, the performance expectations will be used as the “cut scores” and assessment results will be reported in the aggregate; no individual student or professor will be identified (e.g., “XX% of a representative sample of UH Mānoa seniors met the performance expectation for identifying ethical issues scoring 2.4 or higher”). The results will be used to guide institutional- and program-level improvement planning.

2. Method to Establish Performance Expectations

Overview. Faculty members attended a 5-hour session in which they learned the purpose of performance expectations, intended use of results, the process, and key terms. They also discussed the scoring rubric (Appendix A) and discussed their evaluation of student work using the scoring rubric before they collaboratively established the average score on the rubrics that a borderline senior who just meets UH Mānoa expectations will receive. When establishing the performance expectations, the facilitator provided participants with normative data from other participants and the 2010 actual results, and she gave participants opportunities to revise their performance expectations after discussion.

Rubrics and student work samples. The rubric was developed by the Contemporary Ethical Issues (“E”) Focus Board in 2008 and pilot tested in 2009, and it has been distributed to faculty teaching the specially designated “E” courses. Prior to the standard setting session, faculty read and scored six pieces of student work. The student work represented a range of quality written by seniors. When the course instructor’s assignment guidelines were available, these were included with the student work. The student work samples were obtained from professors who were teaching the “E” designated course.

Participants. We invited the 208 faculty members who taught a writing-intensive course, fall 2012 to spring 2014. In addition, we invited faculty members serving on the Ethical Issues Focus Board, Institutional Learning Objectives Implementation Committee, Mānoa Assessment Committee, Foundations Board, and the General Education Committee. Nineteen faculty members attended the session and were from the following departments/programs:

- Academic for Creative Media
- Architecture
- Botany
- Center for Teaching Excellence
- Communications
- Communicology
- English
- First Year Programs
- History
- Indo-Pacific Languages & Literature
- Institute for Teacher Education
- Learning Assistance Center
- Mathematics
- Music
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Religion
- Sociology
- Theatre & Dance
Process to set performance expectations. After the participants had spent several hours sharing their evaluations of the student work using the rubric and learning how their colleagues evaluated the six pieces of student work, the group shifted focus to setting performance expectations. The Assessment Office followed accepted procedures in setting performance standards: participants envisioned the borderline student who just meets UH Mānoa’s expectations for senior-level work and with that student in mind, they answered the question, “What will be the average score on the rubric of the borderline student?” The participants discussed the concept of borderline student until they were comfortable with their conceptualization. They each decided on a performance expectation in the form of a score on the rubric.

The participants’ initial scores were posted on a bar graph along with the group average. They were also given the student results from the 2010 evaluation of ethical reasoning for comparison purposes. Faculty participants discussed the rationales for their score. After discussion, they had an opportunity to revise their score. The final score from each faculty member was averaged for the final performance expectation on the rubric. We followed this procedure for each dimension on the rubric: identifies ethical issue(s); deliberates responsibly using ethical tools, processes, and/or frameworks; and forms sound ethical judgments.

3. Results

Performance expectations. The group average on each dimension is the performance expectation (Table 2). In institutional-level learning assessment, students whose average score on the rubric is 2.4 or higher on identifies ethical issue(s), 2.3 or higher on deliberates responsibly, and 2.4 or higher on forms sound ethical judgments will be deemed “meeting expectations” for a UH Mānoa senior. Individual degree programs may set a higher expectation for their students using the faculty-recommended expectations (Table 2) as a guide.

Table 2. Performance Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Average Score Needed to Meet UH Mānoa Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies ethical issue(s)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberates responsibly using ethical tools, processes, and/or frameworks</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms sound ethical judgments</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Session evaluation. A recommended practice in setting performance expectations is an evaluation of participants’ perceptions in regards to whether the task and purpose were clear. We also included questions related to any effect on their teaching and view of assessment.

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Seventeen (89%) of the faculty participants completed a session evaluation form. Highlights are as follows (detailed results available in Appendix B):

- 94% stated the session was worthwhile.
- 94% would recommend a similar session to their colleagues.
- 94% indicated that the facilitator provided them with a clear understanding of the purpose and tasks.
- 94% indicated that participation in the session led to a change in how they will teach and/or their views of assessment.

Regarding the participants’ perception that the performance expectations were defensible and appropriate, 71% agreed. Eighty-one percent believed the time provided for discussions was adequate. In the open-ended comment sections, several participants expressed concern related to the concept of “what will the borderline student score” as opposed to what faculty desire students to achieve. Several participants stated that more discussion time was needed. During the session, participants verbally stated that the rubric needed improvement and one participant noted that in the open-ended comment section.

4. **Next Steps**

In future institutional-level assessment projects, we will use these performance expectations as the “cut scores”: students at or above the scores will be deemed as “meeting expectations.” The results of the future assessment projects will be reported in the aggregate; no individual student or professor will be identified (e.g., “XX% of a representative sample of UH Mānoa seniors met the performance expectations”). The results will be used to guide institutional- and program-level improvement planning.

In fall 2014, the Institutional Learning Objectives Implementation Committee will assist in distributing the performance expectations to department chairpersons and explain how the performance expectations can be used at the institutional, program, and course level.

To assist with program-level assessment, the Assessment Office will distribute the performance expectations and examples of student work to program assessment coordinators for their consideration. In addition, the results will be presented to faculty groups such as the Contemporary Ethical Issues Focus Board for discussion and action.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifies ethical issue(s)</td>
<td>- Does not identify the ethical issue(s) or realizes something is not “right” but does not clearly identify the professional and/or contemporary ethical issues at play</td>
<td>- Identifies some of the professional and/or contemporary ethical issues or identifies what is legal/illegal or acceptable/unacceptable</td>
<td>- Identifies/names the ethical choices and implications involved in the professional and/or contemporary situation</td>
<td>- Clearly identifies the ethical choices and implications involved in a professional and/or contemporary situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sees issues mostly in “black and white” terms</td>
<td>- Recognizes relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas but does not clearly describe them</td>
<td>- Clearly describes relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas</td>
<td>- Understands the effects of perspective, context, personal views, codes and laws (if applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Specifies the decision-makers and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Integrates clear descriptions of relevant ethical ambiguities/dilemmas into the overall analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberates responsibly using ethical tools, processes, and/or frameworks</td>
<td>- Unclear about the frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to be applied</td>
<td>- Describes the frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics that can be applied</td>
<td>- Draws upon frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to develop pertinent arguments and/or positions</td>
<td>- Draws upon frameworks, principles, and/or code of ethics to develop pertinent arguments and/or positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fails to acknowledge multiple viewpoints or embraces contradictory viewpoints</td>
<td>- Comfortable discussing ethical issues from own point of view, but may have difficulty seeing different points of view</td>
<td>- Debates and/or discusses ethical issues with sensitivity to others’ points of view and different perspectives</td>
<td>- Develops and presents alternate arguments/positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- May discuss ethical issues but unclear on own position and/or the effects of different perspectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Discusses and/or debates ethical issues with sensitivity to others’ perspectives and the context while also defending own position with logic and fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms sound ethical judgments</td>
<td>- Does not specify a resolution or judgment or decision</td>
<td>- Makes a judgment/decision but may not take into account multiple perspectives</td>
<td>- Makes a judgment that considers and is sensitive to multiple perspectives</td>
<td>- Makes a reasoned judgment that takes into account an array of arguments and perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Partial or flawed use of a systematic decision-making process</td>
<td>- Evidence of a logical, systematic decision-making process</td>
<td>- Evidence of a logical, systematic decision-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses professional code of ethics (ONLY for course instructor)</td>
<td>- Does not correctly reference sections of the professional code of ethics</td>
<td>- Cites applicable sections, but may not correctly use in decision-making process</td>
<td>- Correctly cites applicable sections of the professional code and explains how they guide forming a judgment</td>
<td>- Correctly cites applicable sections of the professional code and explains their meaning and/or implications on forming a judgment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

SESSION EVALUATION RESULTS

Number of participants 19
Evaluation form return rate 95% (17 participants)

1. Respondent would recommend a similar session to his/her colleagues 94%
2. Respondent stated the session was worthwhile 94%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>&quot;YES&quot;</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. The facilitator provided the respondent with a clear understanding of the purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The facilitator clearly explained the tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The group discussions aided my understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The time provided for discussions was adequate.</td>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There was an equal opportunity for everyone in my group to contribute his/her ideas and opinions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I was able to follow the instructions and complete the recording forms accurately.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Today’s discussions after the first round of setting performance expectations were helpful to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The information showing the distribution of participants’ performance expectations was helpful to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Knowing the students’ actual results was helpful to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I am confident about the defensibility and appropriateness of the final recommended performance expectations (the “cut scores”).</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The facilities and food helped create a positive working environment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Participation in session led to a change in how they will teach and/or view assessment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of change (will not sum to 100% because respondents could select all that apply)

| Change in how the participant will teach students                          | 59%   |
| Change in how the participant will design assignments                     | 76%   |
| Change in how the participant will evaluate student work                  | 65%   |
| Change in participant’s views of assessment                               | 41%   |
| Other change                                                              | 12%   |
Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Fifteen respondents (88%) described a change(s) they experienced or plan to make:

Teach students (N=6)
- Create a handout on historical ethics.
- Encourage participation from reticent students.
- I am going to try to give students clearer questions and broader possibilities for response
- More...even more :) explicit ethical exploration pulling from the rubric.
- Offer more clear examples of ethical frameworks. Offer access to examples of successful student work.
- Review/show multiple examples of educational ethics applied as well as processes of deliberation

Design assignments (N=6)
- Add some instructions to my assignments. Share rubric (that I did not know was available)
- Assignments. Discussions inspired me to apply for a "E" focus
- Better structured assignments that focus more clearly on reasoning. I tend to hope for the best and make extensive comments now I’m going to try and [illegible] assignments into a component parts TO really [illegible] analysis.
- Make instructions more clear. Make sure assignments, SLO’s, and evaluations are aligned.
- More clarity in problem statement.
- Thinking of creating an E focus course - all discussions, rubric, sample work very helpful

Evaluate student work (N=1)
- Add rubric to course handouts.

Other (N=4)
- Considering an E course
- How I will teach students and how I will interact with faculty and admin; I'll likely challenge my staff and colleagues with more ambiguities and alternatives
- It would be good if faculty could be compensated for this kind of activity - 5 hours is a lot of time. I'm especially concerned about the non-tenure track participants. $50-$100 would make it justifiable to as people for this commitment.
- This experience inspires me to include more ethical reasoning opportunities in my courses. I also want to see if our program can add a E course for our majors.

Fourteen respondents (82%) wrote a comment under "is there anything else you'd like us to know?"

General positive comment (N=5)
- Thank you for your work! It's important :)
- Thank you!
- Thanks!
- Thanx!!
- Wonderful!

Specific positive comment (N=1)
- Great facilitation skills

Observations related to process (N=6)
- But would have liked to also set a standard of where we would like to be
- Felt rushed at the end
- For some, but cut short at end
• It's not just about student samples; it's also about assignment design and instruction (oh, and the rubric). Great discussions but sometimes off topic on 1st day
• People were not all applying the same criteria for setting the cut score (should vs. will)
• The conflict b/w “will” “should” and what “proud of” was frustrating and I think made the results skewed. I’m also really concerned about what appears to be a lack of knowledge on the part of the faculty. I would really like to see training for all faculty. I’m also not really clear on why this is an E focus and not critical thinking focus. This is because we seem to be far more focused on the analysis and decision-making process than on content. Based on comments made during the session it seemed as if content was [illegible] for “ethics” courses, like those in philosophy and religion. If that’s the case it seems like we should drop the picture that we are teaching ethics and recognize we are teaching reasoning. Finally (I promise), the use of Markkula and other recommended sources makes it seem as if these are the only ethical “sources” and that the theories are simple. This leads to simple assignments, which leads to simplistic responses. This goes back to faculty training. END: Having written all of the below and finding out that all students need is essentially 2 weeks of ethics, I really think this isn’t an ethics focus but a critical reasoning focus designation. I don’t know of any ethical theories that can be effectively taught in 2 weeks, let alone multiple theories.

Suggestions (N=3)
• Hope suggestions made regarding rubric will be considered seriously and modifications implemented
• I don’t know [final performance expectation] yet!
• More time needed [for discussion]