



**Rio Salado College
Assessment of Student Learning
Annual Report
2023-2024**

Introduction

The first assessment plan at Rio Salado College (RSC) was implemented in 1991. Since then, ongoing assessment initiatives aimed at increasing student learning have continued to demonstrate evidence of RSC's central focus on this work. Student learning outcomes are measured in five core areas: Critical Thinking, Writing, Information Literacy, Reading, and Oral Communication. These outcomes are assessed at the college level, the program level (as part of Program Review), and via the continuous improvement Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle at the course level. Collectively, these efforts provide a solid infrastructure for assessing and increasing student learning at RSC.

Over the years, RSC's assessment plan has progressed from a static document that was reaffirmed on a periodic basis, to a dynamic, ongoing, and evolving series of activities that are integrated across the teaching and learning spectrum. The Learning Assessment Team includes representation from Faculty Chairs, Senior Administration, and Institutional Research, and has responsibility for coordinating all aspects of student learning assessment.

RSC maintains a public [Assessment of Student Learning website](#) so that the institution's assessment data and processes are transparent and available to all stakeholders.

Overview

During AY2023-24, Student Learning Outcomes focused work has continued in the areas of Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Oral Communication, and Writing. Of particular note for this reporting cycle was the decision to sunset the college-wide Reading outcome and initiate the development of a new Social Responsibility outcome.

Program review has proceeded as scheduled, with three programs undergoing the comprehensive college-level review process and another submitting documentation for discontinuance to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

Work to improve both online instruction and assessment has been ongoing throughout the year based on insights from the Dynamic Assessment Data Display (DADD). The data demonstrate that RSC students taking online classes met or exceeded the 80% college-level threshold in each of the college's student learning outcomes.

PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT (PDCA) improvement cycles are a required component of the College's program review template, a change that went into effect during the 2022-2023 academic year. Selected examples of these PDCA cycles are included in this report.

Additional details on each of these initiatives are provided below.

Student Learning Outcomes Work

Rio Salado College is committed to the assessment and improvement of the following college-wide Student Learning Outcomes:

- Critical Thinking
- Information Literacy
- Oral Communication
- Reading
- Writing

Overall Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

During AY2023-24, nearly 1.3 million online subjective assessment items were assessed by RSC faculty. Nearly three-quarters of these subjective items (982,150) were directly linked to one or more college-wide student learning outcomes. Overall, 83% of these items were assessed as

being at or above college-level. The table below shows student performance disaggregated by learning outcome for assignments submitted during 2023-24.

Assignments at College Level by Learning Outcome			
Student Learning Outcome	Assignments Submitted	Assignments at College Level	Percentage of Assignments at College Level
Critical Thinking	235,271	189,335	81%
Information Literacy	183,866	135,140	83%
Oral Communication	13,203	10,737	81%
Reading	205,230	167,711	82%
Writing	344,490	283,859	82%
Total	1,242,897*	1,030,376	83%

**Since some assessment items are linked to multiple student learning outcomes, this total is higher than the distinct number of assessment items evaluated.*

The data demonstrate that RSC students taking online classes met or exceeded the 80% college-level threshold across all five college-wide student learning outcomes: Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Oral Communication, Reading, and Writing. Selected learning outcome assessment work is described in more detail below.

Critical Thinking

An analysis of more than 200,000 assessments indicates that 81% met the benchmark for college-level critical thinking. This is an improvement from last year when only 79% of the assessments met the benchmark for that reporting period. Below is an example of a departmental PDCA cycle completed during AY2023-24 that resulted in improved Critical Thinking skill attainment.

PDCA Cycle 2: History (HIS) courses

PLAN: The Faculty Chair of History and Geography initiated a new PDCA cycle based on the results of the previous cycle completed during AY2022-23. At that time, only 71% of the students enrolled in *HIS105: Arizona History* were performing at a college level using the Critical

Thinking rubric, and the rubric had not yet been integrated into *HIS110: World History to 1500* and *HIS111: World History 1500*.

DO: During AY2023-24, the Critical Thinking rubric was added to HIS110 and 111, and revisions were made to HIS105 in an effort to improve student attainment of Critical Thinking skills.

CHECK: Below are the summary results for each course as of 6/30/24:

Course	Submissions	Submissions at College Level	Percent at College Level
HIS105	437	393	89.9%
HIS110	946	917	96.9%
HIS111	652	637	97.7%

ACT: Results for HIS105, 110, and 111 have all exceeded the target, and **no** additional interventions are planned at this time.

Information Literacy

More than 180,000 information literacy-related assessments were analyzed during AY2023-24, revealing that 83% met the college-level threshold. During this same time period, a PDCA cycle was conducted tied to dual enrollment information literacy skills.

PDCA Cycle: Dual Enrollment Credible Source Activity

The Information Literacy Outcome Coordinator has created a set of tutorials and activities specifically for dual enrollment instructors to share with their students to help build student skills in areas such as evaluating sources for credibility and determining the authority of an author. During AY2021-22, the outcome coordinator evaluated how well dual enrollment students were performing on an activity that asks them to determine the authority and credibility of a website. It was noted that 37.5% of students were not able to correctly determine whether the website was credible. Students struggled to determine the author of the website and whether information about the author's background should impact the credibility of the information.

Significant changes were made to the activity and deployed during AY2022-23 to provide students with more explicit instructions about how to conduct research into an author's

background. Data was collected during AY2023-24 to determine the effectiveness of the changes, which are reported below.

Dual Enrollment Credible Source Activity	
% of Students at College Level	
Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
62.5%	71%

While the intervention resulted in improvement over the previous iteration of the activity, subsequent updates will be made in the fall of 2024 to continue to help dual students better understand the concepts of authority and credibility; these changes will be analyzed further once there is enough data to pull.

Oral Communication

The Oral Communication learning outcome is designed to provide continuous oral fluency development throughout a student’s degree plan. The Oral Communication Learning Outcome Coordinator continues to promote the oral communication and public speaking video series project that was initiated in AY2020-21. The PDCA cycle from the video series inception is below.

PDCA Cycle Complete: Oral Communication Student and Instructor Videos

Plan - In AY2018-19, only 5,214 oral communication assessments were submitted across all disciplines, which is just a small fraction of the nearly 1.2 million total online assessments submitted by Rio students that year. In addition, 78.4% of the oral assessments were rated as college-level, which fell short of the 80% goal. By AY2020-21, despite ongoing efforts to promote the oral communication rubric, only a handful of disciplines were using it, and the number of oral communication assessments had only grown to 5,495. To increase the number of disciplines incorporating the oral communication learning objective, the learning outcome coordinator created an oral communication and public speaking video series published on both Rio’s internal and public-facing websites, which was shared with Rio’s Faculty Chairs. In AY2022-23, the number of oral communication assessments had grown to 9,344, with 79% of those assignments being at college level, again falling just short of the 80% goal.

Do - To broaden awareness and competency among instructors across all disciplines, the oral communication video series was presented to adjunct faculty and the related Adjunct Faculty Development course, AFD 228: Rio’s Oral Communication Rubric, was redeveloped.

Check - Four years of oral assessment data is available in the following table.

Fiscal Year	Assignments with Oral Comm Dimensions	Total Submissions	Submissions at College-Level	Percent at College-Level
2021	43	10,849	8,407	77.5%
2022	48	7,875	6,071	77.1%
2023	69	9,344	7,376	78.9%
2024	142	13,203	10,737	81.3%

Act - Most recent data show that oral communication rubric is now assessed in 142 distinct assignments across multiple disciplines. Of the 13,203 total submissions, 81% of students performed at a college level, which exceeds the goal. Data will continue to be monitored as even more disciplines incorporate oral communication in their courses.

In addition to this PDCA work, the Oral Communication Student Learning Outcome Coordinator was awarded a three-year grant in AY2023-24 to study the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing oral fluency. Via the grant, Rio was able to obtain 250 licenses per year to access tools available from Quantified AI, with the capacity to include up to 750 students. This is a fantastic opportunity to partner with a growing AI/tech company to publish research on the effectiveness of incorporating this type of technology in the education industry. The College Innovation Network (CIN) has provided a letter of support to partner with design, analysis, and publication of research on the impact of this ed tech solution, and Quantified AI is equally interested in research and publication opportunities. During this research study, the learning outcome coordinator will also collect qualitative (voluntary, anonymous) survey data regarding student perception of AI and its usage in higher education. The data from this research will be published with CIN at the end of the three-year grant period.

Reading

The Reading student learning outcome is designed to provide continuous reading development throughout a student's learning experiences and degree plan. During AY2023-24, 82% of student assignments were rated at a college-level for reading.

While considering the best way to move forward with implementing a new Social Responsibility SLO, it was determined that there was significant overlap between much of the content within the existing Reading rubric and other Rio student learning outcome dimensions. As such, the Rio Salado Faculty Senate, in conjunction with the Assessment of Student Learning Team, made the

decision to sunset the Reading student learning outcome effective June 30, 2024.

Social Responsibility

To help prepare Rio Salado students to be engaged members of their communities, work began in AY2023-24 to design and develop a new college-wide student learning outcome, Social Responsibility. This student learning outcome is designed to measure civic discourse principles, awareness of cultural perspectives, and the impact of both individual and collective action on contemporary social issues.

A new Social Responsibility Student Learning Outcome Coordinator was designated from the Assessment of Student Learning team to lead this work. The team's Student Learning Outcome Coordinators met throughout AY2023-24 to design the [Social Responsibility rubric](#). Rio's rubric was informed by the [AAC&U's VALUE rubrics](#), including Civic Engagement and Intercultural Knowledge & Competence. [Palo Alto College's Social Responsibility rubric](#) was also a source of inspiration, as was the Education Design Lab's [Intercultural Fluency](#) durable skills microcredential.

Social Responsibility was formally adopted as a Rio Salado college-wide student learning outcome by Rio Salado Faculty Chairs in the spring of 2024. At that time, the Social Responsibility rubric was added to the public website along with a [Social Responsibility Rubric Guide](#) that serves as a resource for faculty and students. Chairs will begin adding the Social Responsibility tag to assessments over the coming academic year, and assessment data related to this outcome will be included in subsequent annual reports.

Writing

An analysis of nearly 345,000 assignments indicates 82% of students are writing at college-level for AY2023-24. The Writing student learning outcome measures students' knowledge and skills on written assignments in four areas: content, organization, grammar and mechanics, and language. While the data shows overall student performance exceeded the target, students performed below the target in some assessments. Below are two sample PDCA cycles designed to address assessments for which less than 80% of students performed at college-level:

PDCA Cycle Complete: PAD107 – Public Finance Administration

Plan - Assessment data from the Public Administration Program Review conducted in AY2022-23 showed that 90% or more of students performed at a college level on the Final Projects for all four PAD courses - with one exception. The writing dimension data for the PAD107 Final Project

showed that only 79% of students performed at a college level, which is just shy of the 80% target.

Do - Since many students were losing points due to the failure to cite the data source used to create the Infographic, the assignment instructions were adjusted in March 2023 to require the citation of the source.

Check - Pre- and post-intervention data is included in the following table.

PAD107 Final Project: Writing	
% of Students at College Level	
Pre-intervention 79%	Post-intervention 88%

Act - The intervention correlated with increased Writing scores for the PAD107 Final Project. The target has been met, and no further PDCA cycles are planned at this time.

PDCA Cycle: GBS151 – Introduction to Business

Plan - The individual student learning outcomes for GBS151 indicate students are averaging only 69.1% in Writing.

Summary Table			
Student Learning Outcome	Submissions	Submissions at College Level	Percent at College Level
Critical Thinking	15,362	13,001	84.6%
Information Literacy	7,306	6,022	82.4%
Reading	1,676	1,340	80.0%
Writing	19,694	13,603	69.1%
Total	66,121	51,417	77.8%

In Summer 2023 Flex I, the Chair taught a section of GBS151 with a primary focus on potential curricular improvements. Working alongside the other GBS151 instructors and the Department's Instructional Designer, several opportunities were identified to increase student attainment of college-level writing scores.

- The course required completion of three reports - including one in Week 1.
- The course required completion of two essays and one short-answer essay. However, the short-answer essay assignment occurred after the essay assignments. This did not allow students to gradually build their writing skills with the course concepts as well as review and apply instructor assignment feedback.
- The course included two content quizzes as well as objectively graded parts to both the Midterm and Final. However, due to the extensive number of concepts in the course - additional objectively graded assignments are warranted. The purpose of this change would be to reduce the complexity of several written assignments.

Other existing course assignments and assessments include writing an email, creating an infographic, quizzes, and a Midterm and Final.

Do - A new version of GBS151 rolled out in Summer of 2023. In addition to refreshing/updating the Open Educational Resources content, assignments were adjusted to focus more closely on lesson content in place of outside research.

Also, writing assignments are now more structured. A word-count requirement was added for short-answer essays and a checklist is now included in each lesson.

Example Checklist for Short-Answer Essay

IMPORTANT:

If the submission does not meet the following requirements, it will be returned as incomplete:

- Response to all questions
- Meets the minimum word length
- Includes at least one citation and reference to the lesson material
- Formatted in short-answer essay format

Also, work submitted must be your own original work.

Finally, changes were made to the following lesson assessments to build the course’s writing requirements more gradually and provide more authentic types of writing experiences.

Lesson	Adjustment	Rationale
0	<p>Added a section on Business Writing Strategies to the lesson.</p> <p>Two quizzes were combined into a single quiz</p> <p>APA Citation Exercise requirements</p>	<p>This content has more detailed instructions on how to construct paragraphs.</p> <p>To reduce the number of assignments in the first lesson.</p> <p>A more detailed example was added.</p> <p>A self-check activity was added.</p> <p>Additional assignment instructions were added.</p>
1	<p>Moved assessment from Report to Quiz and Short-Answer Essay.</p>	<p>Split the assessment into both objective and subjective assessment which provides students the opportunity to compose short-answer essays before being required to complete more involved writing requirements.</p>
2	<p>Moved assessment from Report to Quiz and Short-Answer Essay</p> <p>Modified assessment questions to focus on lesson content.</p>	<p>Split the assessment into both objective and subjective assessment and provides students the opportunity to compose short-answer essays before being required to complete more involved writing requirements.</p>
3	<p>Added more content/examples to the Ethical Challenges page to broaden part b of the assessment.</p> <p>Moved assignment from Essay to Email format.</p>	<p>Provides students an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge through an email format - which they may have more experience/comfort in composing.</p>

7	Moved from Report to Short-answer Essay questions.	Reduced writing requirement.
9	Moved from essay to blog post format “from the lesson”.	Provides students an opportunity to be a little more creative in their writing instead of composing an essay.
12	Memo to article for company newsletter.	Moved assignment from Memo (which are no longer a common business practice) to composing an article for a company newsletter.

Check - Due to Rio’s course production cycle, these changes did not go into effect until Fall Flex II, 2023 (10/16/2023). Assessment data will be pulled in Spring 2025 to determine the impact of these changes.

Act - If these changes positively correlate with increased writing scores, the revised assignment structure will be retained. If not, a new PDCA cycle will be initiated.

Dual Enrollment

Rio Salado College regularly assesses teaching and learning in courses offered for dual enrollment.

- Course syllabi, including competencies and assessment methods, are reviewed and approved by college faculty for every section taught.
- Instructor evaluations, which are conducted at least annually, provide evidence that dual enrollment instructors are meeting or exceeding college-level expectations. For example, in AY2023-24, 88% of dual enrollment instructors achieved an “Effective” rating in the “Assessment and Adjustment” category for their peer evaluations.

In the spring of 2024, the process for collection and approval of dual enrollment assessments was centralized and streamlined. This involved faculty review of assessments across 45 distinct academic disciplines. Before being archived, dual assessments are now labeled with their corresponding college-level competency. Moving forward, assessments will be added to the

new consolidated interdisciplinary site once the appropriate college faculty member has completed their review.

PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT Cycles (PDCA)

In keeping with RSC's ongoing focus on relentless improvement, below are selected PDCA cycles that were initiated and/or completed at the departmental level in 2022-23.

PDCA Cycle Complete: Biology (BIO) 105

PLAN: Data from spring 2023 in online BIO105 was included in the 2022-23 Assessment Report. It showed that the target of 80% of students performing at a college level was not being met for Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing.

DO: A new version of BIO105 rolled out on 5/1/23 with a new textbook. Point values on all assignments, including the essay assignments, were modified to reduce the variance in rubric dimensions and bring the scores into closer alignment among instructors. The overall number of essay assignments and the number of essays in each assignment were reduced. The goal for incorporating fewer, but more targeted, essay assignments is to increase student engagement by reducing fatigue as the course progresses.

CHECK: Comparative data is displayed in the table below.

Dimension Names and Associated Outcomes	% of Students at College Level 1/10/22-4/30/23	% of Students at College Level 5/12/23 - current
Application and Use of Examples (Critical Thinking)	66.7%	89.5%
Level of Understanding (Reading)	55.6%	87.4%
Organization (Writing)	66.7%	87.4%

ACT: The updated assessment structure correlated with increased student performance in the areas of Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing. The target has been met across all these learning outcomes, and no further interventions are planned at this time.

PDCA Cycles Complete: American Sign Language (ASL) 202 and Japanese (JPN) 201

PLAN: Even though data from the most recent Languages Department Report indicated that the average post-test results for ASL202 and JPN201 students met the target, there were questions that more than half of the students missed. A careful review revealed that several ASL202 grammar markers were displayed incorrectly on the assessment page and some questions in both ASL202 and JPN201 included vocabulary that had not yet been taught.

DO: The display issues were corrected and updates were made to the ASL202 and JPN201 course content at the end of the spring term.

CHECK: Pre- and post-intervention results are below.

ASL202	
Average post-test results	
Pre-intervention (fall/spring terms) 70%	Post-intervention (summer term) 81%

JPN201	
Average post-test results	
Pre-intervention (fall/spring terms) 79%	Post-intervention (summer term) 97%

ACT: The interventions correlated with an increase in average post-test results for ASL202 and JPN201. The changes have been formally incorporated into the curriculum.

Dimension-Tagging Method	2022-23	2023-24
New Bracketed Method	2,369 (11.6%)	5,411 (25.5%)
Legacy Crosswalk Method	18,062 (88.4%)	15,846 (74.5%)

As part of their participation in the HLC *Facilitating Learning: Leading Campus-Wide Assessment* professional development program, the Assessment team co-chairs piloted the implementation of a more robust program mapping model at the college. A mapping template was created, providing faculty with a more structured model for articulating how program curriculum supports learning outcomes and the student development of skills and competencies. After piloting the template with the college’s [Administration of Justice faculty](#), the Assessment team determined that, moving forward, this mapping work will take place in the year immediately preceding a program’s scheduled program review.

Co-Curricular Student Assessment

RSC’s DADD reporting provides faculty with the ability to compare all student performance on course assignments with those submitted by students engaged in co-curricular programming. For this purpose, co-curricular programming is defined and incorporated into the DADD as Honors, Adult ACE & Phi Theta Kappa students as well as students enrolled in courses with experiential learning opportunities. Data from FY2023-24 indicate that co-curricular students outperformed the general student population on assessment activities across all five college-wide student learning outcomes.

Co-Curricular (CC) Assignments at College Level by Learning Outcome				
Student Learning Outcome	Number of Assignments Submitted by CC Students	Number of CC Student Assignments at College Level	Percentage of CC Student Assignments at College Level	Percentage of All Student Assignments at College Level
Critical Thinking	4,502	3,819	85%	81%
Information Literacy	7,716	6,643	86%	83%
Oral Communication	195	162	83%	81%
Reading	4,920	4,175	85%	82%

Writing	16,704	14,548	87%	83%
Total	58,773	51,398	87%	83%

The following courses were added to the co-curricular dataset for this reporting cycle:

- ASD147: Peer Support Specialist Practicum
- ASD280: Addictions and Substance Use Disorders Practicum
- SWU291: Social Service Delivery Systems

More courses will be added to the co-curricular reporting structure as the college continues to expand internship, practicum, volunteer, and other courses with experiential learning opportunities.

District-wide Assessment

The Maricopa Assessment Committee convened monthly throughout AY2023-24 and Rio’s Assessment Team co-chairs served as the College’s representatives. The group discussed issues tied to program assessment, dual enrollment assessment, and the revised AGEC throughout the academic year, providing Rio with the opportunity to learn more about its sister colleges’ assessment practices. Pertinent information from these meetings was shared out with Rio’s Assessment of Student Learning team during its monthly meetings.

Program Review

Rio Salado College has adopted an iterative formal academic Program Review process that is systematic, comprehensive, sustainable, and designed to promote and foster trust among all stakeholders. Every review contains the same foundational components, including program goals, student learning outcomes, program resources, and co-curricular outcomes, which are addressed by utilizing a template of foundational questions and data sets. The faculty Program Review Coordinator works closely with the Program Chair, identifying best practices, areas for improvement, and recommendations through the template, with feedback for future actions. Once the draft is complete, Learning Assessment Team members meet with the Program Chair to discuss the review. The Chair has an opportunity to make any requested edits before the final

review is submitted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for final action. Once the evaluation cycle has been completed, the review is posted to the RSC public [Assessment of Student Learning website](#).

The following programs participated in the review process for AY2023-24:

- General Business
- Nanotechnology
- Teacher Education Post Baccalaureate Arts, Early Childhood (Notice of Discontinuation was submitted to the ADE)
- Sustainable Foods Systems

Upcoming reviews for AY2024-25 include:

- Accounting
- Administration of Justice
- Community Dental Health Coordination
- Family Life Education
- Teacher Education Post Baccalaureate Special Education, Mild to Moderate Disabilities (ADE approval)

Significant Accomplishments in Learning Assessment Work, 2023-2024

- Over 80% of online assessments for each learning outcome were rated at a college level, which exceeded the goal.
- A new college-wide student learning outcome, Social Responsibility, was adopted.
- The Reading student learning outcome was retired.
- Dr. Angela Felix presented at a panel discussion tied to co-curricular assessment practices at the 2024 HLC Annual Conference.
- Zach Lewis and Sarah Stohr completed the *Facilitating Learning: Leading Campus-Wide Assessment* HLC professional development program. Their culminating project was a program-mapping tool for the college.
- A new process was developed for dual enrollment assessment collection and approval.
- Four programs engaged in the Program Review process.
- DADD reporting was redeveloped as a Tableau dashboard for improved performance.

- Learning outcomes assessment was discussed at the 25th Annual All-Faculty Department Meetings (held virtually during Fall 2023). 562 adjunct faculty members were awarded professional development certificates for attendance.
- Five Outstanding Adjunct Faculty members were recognized for *Contributions to Assessment of Student Learning* at the in-person Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Reception held in October, 2023.
- Adjunct faculty completed 112 Adjunct Faculty Development (AFD) workshops during AY2023-24.
- The 2023-24 Learning Assessment Report was compiled and posted to the RSC public website for access by all internal and external stakeholders.

Learning Assessment Team Members, AY2023-2024

Dr. Julie Cober, Faculty Chair, Oral Communication Student Learning Outcome Coordinator

Janelle Elias, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Dr. Angela Felix, Faculty Chair, Program Review Coordinator, Critical Thinking Student Learning Outcome Coordinator

Rick Kemp, Dean of Instruction and Partnerships

Zach Lewis, Associate Dean, Institutional Research; Assessment Co-coordinator

Dr. Miguel Lucas, Dean of Academic Affairs

Tristan Marble, Faculty Chair, HLC Accreditation Faculty Chair, Social Responsibility Student Learning Outcome Coordinator

Dr. Karol Schmidt, Dean, Institutional Effectiveness & Innovation

Dr. Jennifer Shantz, Faculty Chair, Writing Student Learning Outcome Coordinator

Sarah Stohr, Faculty Chair, Assessment Co-coordinator; Information Literacy Student Learning Outcome Coordinator

Omar Williams, Planning Research Analyst Sr.