INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

In 2016 a group of higher education leaders from member schools of the Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design (AICAD) came together to define and collaborate on a shared set of assessment best practices for the consortium.

In comparing assessment practices between AICAD programs, and in an evaluation of scholarly research on the topic, it was determined that no consistency exists in assessment terminology.

Additionally, while a robust database of assessment strategies exists among higher education institutions nation-wide, few strategies are geared towards colleges of art and design.

Finally, by aligning assessment language, outcomes, and strategies across AICAD institutions, the group strives to develop a culture where assessment data is easily shared between institutions with respect for each institution’s autonomy.

The shared data will allow AICAD schools to benchmark student achievement against similar programs and to collaborate on initiatives promoting the purposes and successes of an art and design education. Furthermore, it will provide AICAD with the necessary data to strengthen its advocacy and marketing nationwide.

The goals of the collaboration are:

1. To established a shared assessment vocabulary for use within AICAD
2. To identify shared learning outcomes across AICAD schools
3. To recommend assessment strategies and tools for the identified outcomes
PARTICIPANTS

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ASSESSMENT TERMINOLOGY

GOAL
A broad statement meant to describe the purposes of education. Goals are achieved by way of successful achievement of learning outcomes and objectives.

OBJECTIVE
Statements that describe the teaching activities and intended purposes of instruction within a course or program.

OUTCOME
A statement that describes essential learning that a student will achieve and reliably demonstrate at the end of a course, program, or degree.

COMPETENCY
Defined by the AICAD schools’ accreditors; typically a statement of specific skills or body of knowledge that a student must achieve as part of a higher education degree.
SHARED OUTCOMES, METHODOLOGY

To determine which outcomes are shared among most AICAD schools, the participating schools began by sharing their Institutional Learning Outcomes and Goals. Where institutional outcomes were unavailable, programmatic outcomes and goals were synthesized by the institution to determine implied institutional outcomes.

Group members analyzed their school’s outcomes and contributed to a comprehensive list of 45 skills that were described in those statements. Each group member then mapped their school's outcomes/goals to the list of 45 skills, generating a database where common outcomes were immediately visible.

Careful consideration and thoughtful dialog, supplemented by review of existing materials by the AAC&U, NASAD, and regional accreditors, led to the drafting of 13 initial shared outcomes.

Continued revision, paired with consultation with AICAD staff and member institution stakeholders, further refined the list. Some outcomes (eg: Cultural Literacy, Global Learning) were set aside as aspirational, while others (eg: Associative & Contextual Critique) were reclassified as assessment methodologies. The results narrowed the list to 8 shared outcomes:

- CONNECTIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES
- CREATIVE THINKING
- CRITICAL THINKING
- DISCIPLINE/MEDIA EXPERTISE
- ETHICAL REASONING
- INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS
- METACOGNITION
- MULTIMODAL LITERACY

Definitions were drafted over the course of a year, incorporating language and terminology from AAC&U, NASAD, regional accreditors, prior AICAD initiatives, and member institutions. The resulting definitions were then distributed to faculty of member institutions, and their feedback was incorporated to develop abridged versions of each definition.

Finally, both the original and abridged definitions were distributed via AICAD survey to all AICAD Chief Academic Officers. The following results reflect the feedback of the 20 survey participants.
SHARED OUTCOMES, REVISED PER CAO FEEDBACK:

CONNECTIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES
The ability to integrate learning across and beyond disciplinary boundaries, to draw connections between ideas and experiences, and to transfer that knowledge into individual and collaborative practice.

CREATIVE THINKING
The ability to synthesize research and experience to generate concepts that are then expressed with inventive and imaginative thinking and making.

CRITICAL THINKING
The ability to examine the relationships among concepts to determine relevance prior to accepting or formulating a conclusion. This requires differentiation between literal meaning and metaphor, and application of these skills in a variety of situations.

DISCIPLINE/MEDIA EXPERTISE
The applications of discipline-specific expertise, including the ability to research within and through various media. This includes awareness of technical skill, historical context, and purposeful application(s).

ETHICAL REASONING
The ability to identify the context of an issue, weigh and emphasize one’s values with alternative perspectives, consider ramifications of potential actions, and respond in an informed and intentional way.

INQUIRY AND ANALYSIS
The ability to engage in inquiry-based learning fueled by questions and supported through research, creative and critical thinking that leads to a deeper understanding of media and processes.

METACOGNITION
The ability to assess one’s growth as a learner in areas such as analysis, problem solving, planning, and transfer of learning and incorporating this self-assessment into creative practice.

MULTIMODAL LITERACY
The purposeful integration of multiple modes of expression to create meaning. This includes demonstrable awareness of audience and historical, cultural, and social contexts.