

ILO 3: Communication

Fall 2025 Assessment Narrative

By the Riverside Assessment Committee

Introduction

According to the Riverside City College catalog, the awarding of an associate degree is intended to represent more than just an accumulation of units. The associate degree says that recipients have taken coursework in broad areas of study including the sciences, mathematics, and humanities, which have allowed them to develop certain capabilities including the ability to communicate clearly and to think critically. Moreover, recipients of the associate degree will be able to demonstrate those capabilities in courses that allow for the introduction, development, and, in some cases, mastery of said skills.

To this end, the College has four institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) that are assessed to measure to what extent (1) the courses identified as general education courses encourage the development of these capabilities, and (2) the students passing these courses have, indeed, developed the capabilities.

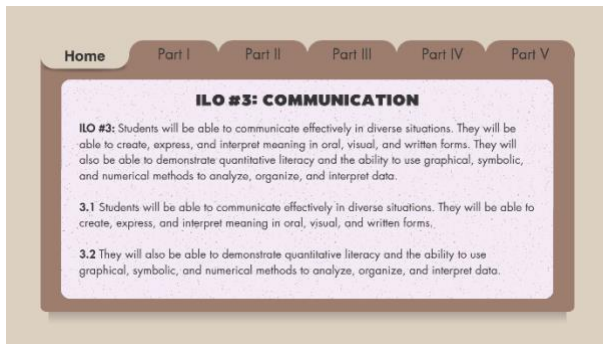
Communication is a primary skill that those earning an associate degree from RCC should possess. The ILO in communication reads as follows:

3.1 Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. Be able to create, express and interpret meaning in oral, visual and written forms. 3.2 They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data.

Previous Assessment

This ILO was last assessed in Fall 2019, and the overall finding was that most artifacts from Communication Studies, Film, and English clearly demonstrated students' ability to communicate effectively, often because the assignments were intentionally structured to develop audience awareness, information processing, self-monitoring, and clear expression. The Math artifact, however, revealed the limits of applying a communication-focused ILO to work that emphasizes quantitative reasoning rather than interpersonal or oral communication, highlighting the importance of carefully interpreting ILO criteria. Overall, the group concluded that RCC students generally have opportunities to meet the Communication ILO through well-designed assignments, that faculty should design tasks with both course SLOs and ILOs in mind, and that assignment creation is an iterative process that benefits from cross-disciplinary discussion and norming.

Current Assessment Project and Instrument



PowerPoint Slide with ILO #3

In Fall 2025, the Riverside Assessment Committee (RAC) conducted a direct assessment of student work across five academic disciplines. The assessment took place over two days, one in November and one in December, and focused on two distinct components of the Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO). Courses were intentionally selected to represent a range of divisions across the college, ensuring a broad and inclusive sample of assignments and student work.

The five content areas and artifacts reviewed were as follows:

Group	Content Area	Artifact
Group 1	CIS-25	Several student samples of a customer service skills fill-in-the-blank activity
Group 2	COMM-1	Final report and a student sample of a proposal for the final persuasive speech
Group 3	DAN-6	Dance appreciation assignment, rubric, and sample student responses at each performance level
Group 4	MATH-1A	One mathematics problem and a student's solution
Group 5	Nursing	Chronic care assignment, accompanying rubric, and three student samples

Collectively, these artifacts provided multiple disciplinary perspectives through which the RAC evaluated both assignments and student performance related to this ILO. The following section presents the findings and themes that emerged from the review of student work.

ILO #3 Assessment Results

Part 1: Understanding the Standard (ILO 3)

As the first phase of the Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) 3 assessment, faculty participated in small-group norming to build a shared understanding of the ILO's components. For each part, faculty considered:

- The relevance of the ILO in our current world of diverse and often data-driven communication methods and media
- How the ILO might be demonstrated in student work.
- How assignments can be designed in alignment with the ILO to support student development or demonstration of the ILO.

Their collective responses offered insight into shared understandings and instructional practices that support students' communication skills.

Key Themes Identified Across Groups:

Four common themes appeared as the groups worked to understand 3.1. Those themes were multimodality, adaptability, agency, and engagement.

- *Multimodality is central*
Groups emphasized oral, visual, and written communication as equally important, with frequent references to:
 - Digital tools and platforms (Canvas, Canva, Studio, OERs, videos, reels)
 - Symbolic and non-textual communication (e.g., performance, gesture, visual design)
- *Audience awareness and adaptability*
Faculty highlighted the importance of students learning to:
 - Adjust tone, language, and format based on audience characteristics (culture, age, background)
 - Communicate appropriately in academic, professional, and social contexts
- *Student agency and choice*
Many groups identified flexibility and student choice as key to demonstrating ILO 3.1:
 - Allowing topic selection
 - Offering multiple formats for demonstrating learning
 - Encouraging self-expression across modalities
- *Critical interpretation of messages*
Several groups stressed that effective communication includes critical engagement—interpreting media messages, reflecting on others' perspectives, and forming independent viewpoints rather than passively consuming information.

With regards to 3.2, the common themes were the importance of interpretation and evaluation of data, the application of learning through realistic tasks, and the ability to explain findings.

- *Understanding and interpreting data representations*
Groups broadly agreed that ILO 3.2 involves students being able to:
 - Read and interpret graphs, charts, spreadsheets, and symbolic representations
 - Understand what data is “saying,” not just how it is displayed
- *Critical evaluation of data*
Multiple groups noted that quantitative communication can be misleading if not critically examined, emphasizing:
 - The need to question bias, accuracy, and framing of data
 - The importance of teaching students to discern trustworthy vs. distorted representations
- *Application through authentic tasks*
Suggested examples for demonstrating ILO 3.2 included:
 - Research projects involving data collection and visualization
 - Marketing, advertising, or applied discipline-based assignments
 - Everyday quantitative tasks (e.g., recipes, performance metrics, real-world problem-solving)

- *Communication of results matters as much as analysis*
Groups consistently framed quantitative literacy as incomplete without the ability to explain findings clearly, often across multiple modalities.

Part 2: Applying the Standard

After identifying common themes as noted above, each group reviewed a selected assignment and corresponding student artifact to evaluate alignment with ILO 3.1 and 3.2. Using the approved assessment rubric, groups reached consensus on whether each assignment provided students with a clear opportunity to demonstrate the targeted learning outcome (Yes), partial opportunity (Approaching), no opportunity (No), or whether the outcome was not applicable. Brief rationales were documented using keywords and short phrases to capture the group's observations.

ILO 3.1 focuses on students' ability to communicate effectively across oral, visual, and written forms, while ILO 3.2 emphasizes quantitative literacy and the use of graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze and interpret data. The rubric used to evaluate assignment effectiveness for each outcome is available in the appendix.

Here is a summary of the findings:

Group	ILO 3.1 Rating	ILO 3.1 Rationale	ILO 3.2 Rating	ILO 3.2 Rationale
Group 2	Yes	Students demonstrated oral and written communication.	Approaching	Research was shared, but data analysis using charts or graphs was limited.
Group 3	Yes	Students communicated meaning through symbolic, visual, and written forms.	Yes	Students interpreted symbolic and quantitative elements embedded in the assignment.
Group 4	Approaching	Some multimodal communication was present, but not consistently.	Yes	Assignment naturally supported graphical and numerical representation.
Group 5	Yes	Students clearly demonstrated oral, visual, and written communication.	Yes	Students were required to analyze and interpret data.

Part 3: Evaluating Utility and Inclusivity

Faculty groups reviewed a provided matrix and selected the single box that best represented their shared experience of the assignment's utility value and content inclusivity.

- Utility value measures how useful students perceive the assignment to be beyond just earning a grade, including personal or professional relevance.
- Inclusivity assesses whether the assignment materials are accessible and familiar to all students and allow multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning, reflecting diverse cultures and learning styles.

Groups then added brief notes explaining their rationale for the chosen box. Below are the group's results and utility/inclusivity ratings:

	High Utility Value	Low Utility Value
High Inclusive Content	<p>Group 1: High (Different learning styles and skills applicable in real life)</p> <p>Group 2: The assignment is highly inclusive because the student can select the topic and complete research to gain the skill of presenting a persuasive argument.</p> <p>Group 3: No rationale provided.</p>	
Low Inclusive Content	<p>Group 5: Takes place in the chronic care workplace with a high degree of practical value and experience for the student(s). Inclusivity was low due to limited student response options.</p>	Group 4: No rationale provided

Part 4: Non-Academic Indicators of Servingness

According to Dr. Gina Ann Garcia, the concept of *servingness* is multidimensional and includes both academic and non-academic indicators. Because RCC is an HSI, our assignments should reflect these indicators. For Part 4 faculty groups reviewed the assignment through the lens of Dr. Gina Ann Garcia's concept of *servingness*, which includes non-academic indicators that support student development.

Each group was asked to evaluate whether the assignment offered students the opportunity to develop the following:

1. **Academic Self-Concept** – confidence in their academic potential
2. **Leadership Identity** – awareness and development of leadership skills
3. **Racial Identity** – understanding of their racial/ethnic background
4. **Critical Consciousness** – awareness of systems of oppression and how they impact identity
5. **Civic Engagement** – participation in community or public life

For each indicator, the group marked one of the following: *Present, Somewhat Present or Not Present.*

Groups were to reach consensus and evaluate how the assignment contributed to these dimensions of student identity and development. Below are the group's results and non-academic ratings:

Group	Academic Self-Concept	Leadership Identity	Racial Identity	Critical Consciousness	Civic Engagement
Group 1	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Group 2	Present	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat	Somewhat
Group 3	Present	Not Present	Somewhat	Present	Not Present
Group 4	Somewhat	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present
Group 5	Somewhat	Somewhat	Not Present	Not Present	Present

Across groups, faculty noted that the assignment has potential to support students' development of academic self-concept, leadership identity, racial identity, critical consciousness, and civic engagement, but that these outcomes were inconsistently evident in the artifacts reviewed. Several groups observed that the assignment invited students to explore personal, cultural, or community-related topics, which can create opportunities for identity reflection and engagement. However, the extent to which these outcomes were present often depended on the student's level of engagement, lived experience, and topic selection, rather than being explicitly built into the assignment design.

Some groups found that while the assignment guidelines encouraged exploration, the student work did not consistently demonstrate deeper engagement with social context or systems of influence, resulting in indicators being marked as somewhat present. Other groups noted evidence of increased self-confidence, leadership development, and civic engagement in the artifacts reviewed. Overall, faculty agreed that clearer prompts, intentional scaffolding, and more explicit connections to equity-centered goals could strengthen the assignment's ability to consistently support and surface these liberatory outcomes in student work.

Part 5: Connecting the Assessment to RCC's Mission Statement

Faculty groups were asked to reflect on whether ILO #3 aligns with RCC's mission statement, based on their analysis in Parts 3 and 4. Across all groups, faculty generally agreed that ILO #3 aligns with Riverside City College's mission statement, particularly in its emphasis on helping students achieve educational and career goals through effective communication in diverse contexts. Groups highlighted that the ability to create, express, and interpret meaning across multiple modalities, including oral, written, visual, and data-informed communication, supports students' academic development and contributes to their long-term social and economic mobility. Several groups also noted that assignments allowing students to select meaningful topics and engage in intercultural or embodied forms of communication promote inclusivity and relevance for a diverse student population.

At the same time, faculty identified opportunities for growth. While the assignment demonstrated utility and some inclusive elements, some groups felt that the equity-focused and servingness aspects of the RCC mission were not consistently or explicitly embedded. Faculty suggested that stronger connections

to campus resources, culturally responsive materials, and clearer equity-oriented prompts could further support students' varied identities and learning needs. Overall, faculty concluded that ILO #3 is well aligned with RCC's mission, but that intentional assignment design and scaffolding could strengthen how this alignment is realized in practice.

Analysis

First, it is interesting to note that faculty interpret "communication" quite differently across disciplines. For example, faculty in the humanities and social sciences focus on audience awareness, expression, and multimodal presentation of information. Dance faculty, on the other hand, interpret communication symbolically through movement and gesture. Math and STEM faculty, like dance faculty, focus on the use of symbols, in this case graphs, but see communication as the explanation of problem-solving processes. These differences suggest that the language in this ILO is functioning as it was intended, as flexible and adaptable across disciplines. However, this diversity in definitions of the term "communication" suggest that a more controlled and shared norming is needed to ensure clarity and consistency as groups record their assessments for Part 2 of the rubric.

Second, the results suggest that evidence of quantitative literacy is often assumed rather than observed. Especially in Groups 2 and 4, faculty noted that while an assignment *could* support ILO 3.2, the artifact did not actually show graphs, charts, or meaningful data interpretation. For example, Group 2 noted that the assignment asked for research but did not *require* charts or graphs. Similarly, Group 4 noted that Math assignments naturally align with ILO 3.2, but the group left the rationale section blank, suggesting they assumed the artifacts aligned with the ILO rather than actually seeing charts or graphs in the student work.

This second point speaks to the larger issue of faculty making explicit the purpose of their assignments. A detailed discussion was initiated by the student members of the groups about their interest in being told the purpose of the assignments. For example, a student working with the group that evaluated the nursing artifacts, who herself had completed this assignment, had this to say:

I was like, oh yeah, I remember doing that, and I did X, Y, and Z, 1, 2, 3, and I was like, oh, I see how that's applicable there, and like, why they did that. And so, I feel like that was kind of interesting to see kind of what goes into... the creation of the assignment, and, like, what additional factors are considered that, like, I wouldn't normally have thought of. I feel like that was interesting. I feel like it would be helpful to know, because it's kind of like. The point of this one assignment was, like, um, looking at, uh, dialysis patients and, like, the chronic care model, and, like. Um, like, the continuity of care within that, and that's, like, a much bigger picture in nursing in general.

In other words, this student surmised that she would have found it helpful to be explicitly told the larger purpose of the assignment and how that assignment connected to the nursing field in general. Other students in the discussion echoed this student's statement.

Third, despite RCC possessing the designation of Hispanic-serving institution and having had multiple trainings on the concept of “servingness,” this concept is not well understood. Across all groups, servingness indicators were the most unevenly rated and least thoroughly explained. For example, faculty struggled most with what **racial identity** and **critical consciousness** might look like in assignments across disciplines. During the scoring process, two separate scorers, a faculty member and a student, both indicated that they found identifying the non-academic indicators of servingness a challenge, with the faculty member saying “How does [one’s ethnic identity] help... when they’re trying to solve a math problem.” Similarly, one of the student participants said he found it “a little challenging,...being able to apply, like, for example, civil engagement to” the artifacts. In addition, faculty believed that **civic engagement** appeared only when assignments were explicitly tied to real-world or community contexts.

Fourth, despite struggling with the concept of “servingness,” faculty are increasingly attuned to the concepts of equity and inclusivity. This assessment project suggests faculty can see how those concepts might appear in assignments. For instance, assignments that offered students choices—in topics, in ways to display their knowledge—were seen as inclusive while those that offered narrow response formats and/or limited response options were seen as less inclusive. This is meaningful because it shows faculty can recognize inclusivity and equity even when assignments are not fully aligned.

Finally, after several cycles of assessing the alignment of the ILOs with the college mission statement, it is clear that the ILOs are, indeed, aligned, and future time spent on assessing this is not necessary.

Future Implications and Recommendations

Based on the analysis above, here are the RAC’s recommendations.

First, in future scorings, the RAC coordinator(s) need to emphasize norming. Norming is not just a scoring step; it is a faculty development tool that deepens shared understanding of learning outcomes. In other words, the norming part of this assessment project is crucial and needs to be more structured and guided, specifically in Part 1 and Part 4 of the rubric. To that end, we recommend that Part 1 and Part 4 be done as a whole group rather than breaking into small groups.

Part 1 should focus on brainstorming key words and phrases to help the groups see (1) what does the ILO mean to them, and (2) what are the many ways understanding and development of the ILO might appear in student work. Once many key words and phrases have been shared out, the whole group should narrow down to two to three words/phrases that will be used by all when members break into small groups for Part 2 to assess the individual artifacts.

Part 4 can work in a similar way. Results from Part 4 indicate that faculty would benefit from additional guidance in applying the servingness indicators to assignments and student work. A whole-group facilitated norming session could help establish shared understanding by examining how these indicators might reasonably emerge across disciplines. Emphasizing whether assignments provide space for students to engage with servingness—rather than requiring explicit demonstration of specific indicators—may lead to more consistent and equitable application of the framework.

Second, since Part 5 does not give us any actionable data, RAC recommends that this section of the ILO assessment rubric be eliminated. Eliminating this section will give us more time for the whole-group norming that is necessary in Part 1 and Part 4.

Finally, the committee continues to face challenges related to attendance and consistency in scoring across multiple assessment days. In Fall 2025, scoring occurred on two separate days—one in November and one in December—with different group membership across sessions. This inconsistency resulted in incomplete norming, including Group 1 having entirely different members across days and not completing a scoring rubric. In addition, significant time on the second day was spent orienting new participants and reviewing previously discussed artifacts, which slowed the overall scoring process. We plan to discuss options at our next meeting, including providing rubrics and artifacts to everyone to pre-read and/or scoring on a single day.