

# COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL<sup>1</sup> FOR STUDENT WORK

The purpose of this protocol is to provide opportunities for teachers to discuss pieces of students' work, notice integration and opportunities for growth. The protocol can be used to assess and support students, to advance professional development and to reflect about assignment design.

## I. GETTING ACQUAINTED – GENERAL ASSESSMENT

- 1. Introducing the work:** Presenting teacher shares minimal information about the work avoiding value description – e.g., stating the course and the level, whether it is initial or advanced, and the assignment.
- 2. Clarifying specific goal:** The group makes sure that the goals for the conversation are clear. For instance, are we seeking to examine the degree to which a piece represents integrative or interdisciplinary understanding? Are we trying to diagnose opportunities for growth in an initial or developing piece?
- 3. Looking at the work:** In silence, individuals read or observe the work brought in.
- 4. Pointing out:** The group points out any aspect of the work noticed withholding judgment about quality or comments about taste.
- 5. Valuing the work:** Group members share general qualities of the work that they appreciate (e.g. student shows strong personal voice, paper is clearly composed, student uses primary sources, provocative use of imagery.)
- 6. Raising questions:** Once everyone has a chance to describe appreciated qualities in a work, the group is asked to raise questions and concerns that have come up. Participants are reminded that not all questions will be answered. Questions open up the work and make the group's thinking visible.

## II. ZOOMING IN – TARGETING ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRATIVE/INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING

### 7. Discerning the purpose of the work:

Based on their reading (observations, etc) of the work, **and** their knowledge of the assignment (see #1 above), group members describe what they view as the purpose of the work, pointing to the evidence in the work that makes them say so.

Optional: once the group agrees on the inferred purpose or purposes of the work, they can discuss the degree to which this purpose lends itself to or embodies integration or interdisciplinary work. Is there something in the purpose that invites students to make that integrative step?

### 8. Revealing disciplinary grounding:

Group members describe what they view as the disciplinary insights/modes of thinking or ability areas that seem to be informing this work, pointing to the evidence in the work that makes them say so.

Focusing on one discipline or ability area at a time, the group discusses these questions:

Are the particular disciplinary insights/modes of thinking selected appropriate to inform the purpose of the work? Does it make sense to bring them to bear upon the issue?

To what extent is the student able to use disciplinary insights/modes of thinking or ability areas in accurate and/or effective ways?

What suggestions might we offer to this student to deepen or develop their use of disciplinary insights or ability areas in the context of this work?

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<sup>1</sup> Developed by Veronica Boix-Mansilla, March 2006, and adapted for National Project on Assessing Learning in Learning Communities

**9. Revealing integrations:**

Group members describe what they view as overarching integrations of disciplinary perspectives attempted by the student, pointing to the evidence in the work that makes them say so. How is the student bringing things together--for instance, is the student offering a complex explanation, an aesthetic synthesis, a contextualization, a pragmatic solution, or some other product based on integration?

(Note: the form of the integration may be signaled in the assignment itself; the focus here is on what the work itself does. The inferred purpose of these things—the initial assignment and the student’s work—may be the same, or they may not.)

Once the group has gained a sense of *how* the disciplinary insights seem to be coming together, group members discuss: to what extent does the integration appear to enrich, enlarge, or deepen the student’s understanding of the issue under study?

(One way to get at this is by asking what would have happened to students’ understanding if discipline x had not been brought in.)

What suggestions might we offer to this student to deepen or develop the integrative or interdisciplinary nature of the work?

**10. Assessing thoughtfulness:**

Group members describe what they view as student’s reflections about the nature of his or her work and learning (e.g. comments on the relevance of the work, the limitations of single disciplines, limitations of the work itself). Participants are asked to point to the evidence in the work that makes them say so.

Once the group has gained a sense of the reflective stance taken in the work, the group discusses how student reflections reveal a developing ability to do interdisciplinary work.

What suggestions might we offer to this student to deepen the reflective stance they take?

### III. STEPPING BACK

**11. Hearing from the presenting teacher:**

After listening without intervening, the presenting faculty adds her/his perspective on the general and targeted assessment comments. He or she may or may not choose to address particular questions raised or clarify aspects of context.

**12. Implications for teaching:**

By examining students’ work in this way, what you have learned about designing assignments that invite integrative or interdisciplinary learning?

**13. Reflecting on protocol:**

It is always helpful to leave time at the end to revisit the process and the protocol, considering what was helpful in the conference structure and what was frustrating.