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Instruction: Core Competencies

Abstract

The ISU Library's Instruction Competencies Task Force reviewed and adapted the national [ALA/ACRL Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians Standards](#) to guide instruction-related professional development and teaching practices of ISU librarians who teach.

Disciplines

Library and Information Science

Instruction: Core Competencies (03/25/09)

Susan A. Vega García

Instruction Competencies Task Force members: Susan A. Vega García, chair; Tobie Matava, Diana Shonrock

The ISU Library's Instruction Competencies Task Force has reviewed and adapted the national ALA/ACRL Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians Standards to guide instruction-related professional development and teaching practices of ISU librarians who teach. Once adopted, these Core Competencies will stand with the existing Bibliographer Competencies and Reference Competencies. The Task Force has organized core competencies alphabetically into the following 12 categories:

1. Administrative skills
2. Assessment and evaluation skills
3. Communication skills
4. Curriculum knowledge
5. Information literacy integration skills
6. Instructional design skills
7. Leadership skills
8. Planning skills
9. Presentation skills
10. Promotion skills
11. Subject expertise
12. Teaching skills

Each category contains core skills for ISU librarians who teach, referred to in competencies below by the phrase "The effective instructor..."

Instruction: Core Competencies

1. Administrative skills

The effective instructor:

- 1.1. Communicates own instruction activities and goals with the head of instruction on a regular basis to ensure alignment with desired learning outcomes, goals and objectives of the overall instruction department.
- 1.2. Works well in a team environment sharing knowledge, skills, and time to help improve instructional services.

- 1.3. Maintains and regularly reports accurate statistics and other records reflecting own instruction activities.
- 1.4. Maintains own instruction schedule. Notifies appropriate faculty and staff if alternate coverage needs to be arranged.

2. Assessment and evaluation skills

The effective instructor:

- 2.1 Selects or designs effective assessments of student learning and attitudes, and uses the data collected to guide personal teaching improvement and professional development.
- 2.2 Incorporates student learning assessment into all course-related instruction sessions and other instruction activities.
- 2.3 Retains and analyzes one's own teaching assessment data and can articulate its role in guiding one's teaching practice and its improvement.
- 2.4 Includes student evaluation of teaching assessment data in annual evaluation materials and promotion and tenure portfolios, and articulates what the data mean in terms of one's own teaching performance and professional development over time.
- 2.5 Participates in formal peer evaluation of teaching, both one's own sessions and observing those of others, and uses those feedback opportunities for teaching improvement.

3. Communication skills

The effective instructor:

- 3.1. Maintains awareness of communication needs of diverse learners, and adjusts communication style and methods accordingly.
- 3.2. Leads or facilitates class or session discussion of controversial or unexpected issues in a skillful, non-judgmental manner that helps the group to learn.
- 3.3. Uses appropriate communication technologies to provide assistance to students both in and outside the classroom.
- 3.4. Requests feedback from students, groups, and peers on instruction-related communication skills and uses that feedback for teaching improvement.

4. Curriculum knowledge

The effective instructor:

- 4.1. Analyzes the curriculum in assigned subject area(s) to identify and reach out to courses and programs appropriate for instruction.
- 4.2. Collects copies of current syllabi in assigned subject areas in order to maintain awareness of student assignments and the role of the Library in completing these assignments.

4.3 Maintains awareness of local and national curricular trends and topics within one's assigned subject areas.

4.4 Maintains awareness of curriculum changes and decisions within one's assigned subject areas at program, department, and college levels, as relevant, and communicates with head of instruction regarding changes with potential impact on Library instruction services.

5. Information literacy integration skills

The effective instructor:

5.1 Is familiar with the ACRL Information Literacy standards and uses these standards to guide course-related instruction sessions.

5.2 Can articulate which ACRL Information Literacy standards are being addressed in one's own course-related instruction sessions.

5.3. Describes the role of information literacy in academia to students, faculty & staff in one's assigned subject areas.

5.4. Collaborates with classroom faculty to introduce and integrate appropriate information literacy competencies, concepts, and skills into library instruction sessions, assignments, and course content.

5.5. Communicates with classroom faculty and administrators in assigned subject areas to collaboratively plan and implement the incremental integration of information literacy competencies and concepts within a subject discipline curriculum.

5.6. Where relevant subject-specific Information Literacy standards exist, is familiar with those standards and uses them to guide course-related instruction sessions.

6. Instructional design skills

The effective instructor:

6.1. Communicates and collaborates with classroom faculty in defining expectations and desired learning outcomes in order to determine appropriate information literacy proficiencies and resources to be introduced in library instruction.

6.2. Sequences information in a lesson plan to guide the instruction session, course, workshop, seminar, or other instructional material.

6.3. Creates learner-centered course content, such as course materials, WebCT content, and online handouts, and incorporates activities directly tied to learning outcomes.

6.4. Assists learners to assess their own information needs, differentiate among sources of information, and help them to develop skills to effectively identify, locate, and evaluate sources.

6.5. Scales presentation content to the amount of time and space available.

6.6. Designs instruction to best meet the common learning characteristics of learners, including prior knowledge and experience, motivation to learn, cognitive abilities, and circumstances under which they will be learning.

6.7. Integrates appropriate technology into instruction to support experiential and collaborative learning as well as to improve student receptiveness, comprehension, and retention of information.

7. Leadership skills

The effective instructor:

7.1. Demonstrates initiative by actively seeking out instruction opportunities or instruction committee work within the Library, at ISU, and in regional or national organizations.

7.2. Encourages librarians and classroom faculty to participate in discussions, ask questions, and to share ideas regarding instruction.

7.3. Initiates and develops relationships / reaches out to classroom faculty and instructors in assigned subject areas to develop potential instruction opportunities.

8. Planning skills

The effective instructor:

8.1. Plans presentation content and delivery in advance, and manages preparation time for instruction.

8.2. Uses ACRL Information Literacy Standards to guide content planning and the learning goals of the instruction session.

8.3. Plans session assessment in advance, and manages time to gather and analyze own instruction assessment data on a routine basis.

8.4. Incorporates advance room preparation and technical check, when relevant, into session planning process to ensure all is working well for the instruction session.

8.5. When instructional technologies will be used, plans in advance for any necessary training or consulting in their use well before presentation.

9. Presentation skills

The effective instructor:

9.1. Makes the best possible use of voice, eye contact, movement, and gestures to keep the instruction session lively and students engaged.

9.2. Presents instructional content in diverse ways (written, oral, visual, online, or using presentation software) and selects appropriate delivery methods according to class needs.

9.3. Uses classroom instructional technologies and makes smooth transitions between technological tools.

9.4. Seeks to clarify confusing terminology, avoids excessive jargon, and uses vocabulary appropriate for level of students.

9.5. Practices or refines instruction content as necessary in order to achieve familiarity and confidence with planned presentation.

9.6 Incorporates student-centered active learning strategies into session to enhance student engagement and learning.

9.7 Collects and analyzes own assessment data and uses it to reflect on presentation skills and to guide continuous improvement.

9.8 Keeps up with professional development opportunities and improvement in the use of existing and emerging physical and online classroom technologies, as relevant.

10. Promotion skills

The effective instructor:

10.1. Promotes library instruction opportunities and services to new faculty, underserved departments and programs, and elsewhere on campus, as relevant to instruction responsibilities and assigned subject areas.

10.2. Establishes and maintains a working relationship with assigned academic departments and programs in order to incorporate library instruction into the curriculum and other educational initiatives.

10.3. Represents the library instruction programs and initiatives in an effective and positive manner at local, regional, national meetings, conferences, and communications.

11. Subject Expertise

The effective instructor:

11.1. Keeps current with basic theories, methodologies, and topics in assigned subject areas and incorporates those ideas, as relevant, when planning instruction.

11.2. Identifies core primary and secondary sources within assigned subject area(s) and promotes the use of those resources through instruction.

11.3. Uses the vocabulary for the subject and related disciplines in the classroom and when working with departmental faculty and students.

11.4 Keeps current with relevant reference materials and related research finding tools in one's assigned subject areas.

12. Teaching skills

The effective instructor:

12.1 Creates a learner-centered teaching environment within instruction sessions by using active, collaborative, hands-on opportunities, and other appropriate learning activities.

12.2 Modifies teaching methods and delivery to address different learning styles, language abilities, developmental skills, and the diverse needs of student learners.

12.3 Participates in constructive student-teacher exchanges by encouraging students to ask and answer questions by allowing adequate time, rephrasing questions, and asking probing or engaging questions.

12.4 Modifies teaching methods to match the class style and setting.

12.5 Encourages teaching faculty during the class to participate in discussions, to link library instruction content to course content, and to answer student questions.

12.6 Reflects on practice in order to improve teaching skills and acquires new knowledge of teaching methods and learning theories.

12.7 Shares teaching skills and knowledge with other instructional staff.

12.8 Commits to self-development of teaching skills and related continuing education through participation in relevant local, regional, and national workshops, professional development sessions and conferences.

Resources consulted:

ALA / ACRL Standards for Proficiencies for Instruction Librarians and Coordinators

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/profstandards.cfm>