UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ARLINGTON

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND REPORTING

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY USING AAC&U VALUE RUBRIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

Fall 2024 Report

Assessment of Personal Responsibility, Fall 2024 Report

Personal Responsibility is the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making. As one of the six Texas Core Curriculum (TCC) objectives defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), it plays a critical role in preparing students to make informed decisions, understand ethical dilemmas, and take accountability for their actions within academic, personal, and civic contexts. The THECB's definition is grounded in the AAC&U's Ethical Reasoning framework, which emphasizes students' ability to assess their own values, recognize ethical issues, and reason through moral decisions while considering the perspectives of others and the broader social context.

At The University of Texas at Arlington (UT Arlington), Personal Responsibility is assessed on a rotating, multi-year cycle alongside the other TCC core objectives. Assessment occurs through Signature Assignments embedded in courses across approved Foundational Component Areas (FCAs), including Communication, Language, Philosophy and Culture, American History, and Government/Political Science. These assignments are evaluated by trained faculty and staff using the AAC&U Personal Responsibility VALUE Rubric, which includes key dimensions such as striving for excellence, integrity, contributing to community, perspective-taking, and ethical reasoning.

This report presents results from the Fall 2024 assessment cycle. Student work was evaluated to determine how effectively students demonstrate ethical awareness, integrity, and decision-making. The findings serve to inform faculty-led discussions and guide improvements in teaching practices that foster the development of personal and ethical responsibility among undergraduates.

Method

Participants

The Fall 2024 assessment of Personal Responsibility included a total of 175 undergraduate students, reflecting the diverse demographics of UT Arlington's student body. A slight majority of participants were female (55.43%), while male students comprised 44.57% of the sample. The racial and ethnic distribution was led by Hispanic/Latino students (36.00%), followed by Black/African American (18.29%), White (17.71%), and Asian (17.14%) students. Additional representation included

Foreign students (7.43%), students identifying as Multiple Ethnicities (2.86%), and a small portion who did not specify their race/ethnicity (0.57%).

In terms of educational background, 51.43% of students identified as first-generation college students, while 41.71% were non-first-generation. For 6.86% of the sample, first-generation status data were not available (see Table 1).

Table 1
Student Demographics

Categorical Information	N	%
Gender		
Female	97	55.43%
Male	78	44.57%
Racial/Ethnic Description		
Hispanic/Latino	63	36.00%
Black/African American	32	18.29%
White	31	17.71%
Asian	30	17.14%
Foreign	13	7.43%
Multiple Ethnicities	5	2.86%
Not Specified	1	0.57%
First Generation Student		
First Generation	90	51.43%
Non-First Generation	73	41.71%
First Generation Determination Data Unavailable	12	6.86%

The Fall 2024 assessment of Personal Responsibility included students from a range of academic levels and enrollment backgrounds. The largest groups were juniors (29.14%) and sophomores (28.57%), followed by seniors (21.14%) and freshmen (20.57%), with one fifth-year student (0.57%). This balanced distribution reflects participation across both lower- and upper-division undergraduate coursework. In terms of enrollment history, nearly half of the students (49.71%) began their studies at UT Arlington in 2022–2023, with an additional 28.00% entering in 2021–2022. Smaller percentages began in 2020–2021 (12.57%), 2019–2020 (4.00%), and 2018 or earlier (5.71%). Most students were enrolled full-time (86.86%), with a smaller proportion enrolled part-time (13.14%). Additionally, 67.43% of students were continuing UT Arlington students, while 32.57% had transferred from other institutions. These status characteristics suggest that the assessment sample includes a broad cross-section of students at different academic stages, which supports the generalizability of findings related to the development of personal and ethical responsibility across the undergraduate experience (see Table 2).

Table 2
Student Status at UT Arlington

Categorical Information	N	%
Academic Level		
Junior	51	29.14%
Sophomore	50	28.57%
Senior	37	21.14%
Freshman	36	20.57%
Fifth Year	1	0.57%
Enrollment Year		
2022 - 2023	87	49.71%
2021 - 2022	49	28.00%
2020 - 2021	22	12.57%
2019 - 2020	7	4.00%
2018 and Prior	10	5.71%
Academic Load		
Enrolled Full-Time	152	86.86%
Enrolled Part-Time	23	13.14%
Transfer Student		
Non-Transferred	118	67.43%
Transferred	57	32.57%

*Eligibility as of Spring 2024

The assessment sample for Personal Responsibility in Fall 2024 included students from a broad range of academic disciplines across UT Arlington. The largest representation came from the College of Engineering (21.71%) and the College of Science (20.00%), together accounting for over 40% of the total sample. Other notable contributors included the College of Business (13.71%), the College of Nursing and Health Innovation (12.00%), and both the Division of Student Success and the College of Architecture, Planning & Public Affairs (each with 10.29%). Smaller portions of the sample were drawn from the College of Liberal Arts (7.43%), the School of Social

Work (4.00%), and the College of Education (0.57%).

Table 3
Students by Colleges/Schools

College/School	No. of Students	Percentage
College of Engineering	38	21.71%
College of Science	35	20.00%
College of Business	24	13.71%
College of Nursing & Health Innovation	21	12.00%
Division of Student Success	18	10.29%
College of Architecture, Planning & Public Affairs	18	10.29%
College of Liberal Arts	13	7.43%
School of Social Work	7	4.00%
College of Education	1	0.57%

This distribution reflects a diverse cross-section of students from both STEM and non-STEM fields, supporting the integration of personal responsibility assessment across multiple Foundational Component Areas. It also underscores the broad institutional commitment to evaluating ethical decision-making and accountability within a variety of disciplinary contexts.

Procedure

Undergraduate students enrolled in various sections of ANTH 2322 – Global Culture course in the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters completed Signature Assignments approved by the UT Arlington Core Curriculum Committee. These assignments directed students to write an essay describing their understanding of ethical reasoning and values.

After completion, ungraded student samples were collected from their departments. In preparation for the UT Arlington Scoring Day, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting then de-identified these samples by assigning tracking numbers and removing any personal identification information (e.g., the student's name, class, semester, etc.) to mitigate rater bias and protect the confidentiality of student information.

Assessment Instrument

Evidence of Personal Responsibility within the Signature Assignments was assessed using the AAC&U Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric (AAC&U, 2009). A team of faculty representing institutions across the United States developed the rubric for use across academic disciplines as part of a national initiative called Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE; AAC&U, 2009). The AAC&U Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric is organized into five dimensions: 1) Ethical Self-Awareness, 2) Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, 3) Ethical Issue Recognition, 4) Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, and 5) Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts. However, for this year's assessment, the second dimension, "Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts," was removed. This decision was made because the chosen assignments did not provide any evidence related to this particular dimension. For details of all dimensions, see the Appendix A.

The rubric contains a matrix that provides a narrative description of the expected quality of work and corresponding point values for scoring the six measures. The rubric describes each dimension and uses a four-point scoring scale (see Appendix A). The rubric is a matrix that provides a narrative description of the expected quality of work and corresponding point values for scoring the six measures. The point values range from 1 to 4, with 1 indicating baseline performance (Benchmark-1), 2 indicating approaching milestone (Milestone-2), 3 indicating achieved milestone (Milestone-3), and 4 indicating the highest mastery (Capstone-4) of Personal Responsibility. AAC&U, the authors of the rubric, permit zero ratings if the paper does not meet the minimum content or quality standards defined in the rubric. The attainment target (numerical ratings) was set above the benchmark according to AAC&U recommendations (Greenhoot & Bernstein, 2012). The attainment target was set at a score of 2 (Milestone-2).

Raters, Rater Calibration, and Scoring

Sixteen qualified UTA faculty/staff raters with advanced degrees relevant to the core component being scored were recruited to participate in an in-person scoring session held on campus in July-August 2023. De-identified student papers were rated using the AAC&U

VALUE Rubric for Personal Responsibility. Each rater was assigned a code to use in completing the rating worksheet, which allowed the assessment team to track the papers rated by each person and ensure rater anonymity in the final dataset.

On the scoring day, raters gathered and completed a facilitated rater-calibration process. Following an overview of the rating process and the rubric, raters engaged in a facilitated discussion about the rating dimensions and scale on the rubric, intending to narrow the range of possible interpretations for each dimension. Next, raters reviewed a sample anchor paper and assigned ratings, followed by a facilitated discussion of assigned ratings to align the rater interpretation and application of the rubric more closely.

Next, the actual scoring process began. Each paper was assigned to at least two raters, and each rater scored the paper independently using the rubric. If the values of the skill measure scores for a paper from the two raters were identical or within one point difference, then the two scores were considered in agreement and averaged. For example, if Rater A scored the Cultural Diversity measure with a value of 2 and Rater B scored the same measure with a value of 3, then the rating was considered in agreement, and scores for that dimension were averaged, resulting in a score value of 2.5. If the scores from the two raters differed by more than two points, then a third rater was assigned the paper. In such cases, three scores were averaged together to determine the final score.

Analysis and Results

Inter-rater Agreement

Inter-rater agreement was analyzed to assess the consistency of scores assigned by different raters across the four dimensions of the Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric, which UT Arlington uses to evaluate Personal Responsibility. Agreement was counted when raters scored within one point of each other, and the percentage was calculated as the number of agreements divided by the total number of ratings. The results show generally strong agreement among raters. The highest consistency was observed in Ethical Issue Recognition (91%), indicating that raters were highly aligned in identifying whether students recognized ethical problems in the context of their assignments. Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (84%) and Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (80%) also showed good consistency across raters.

However, Ethical Self-Awareness had the lowest agreement at 76%, suggesting greater variability in how raters interpreted and applied scoring criteria for this dimension. This may point to a need for enhanced calibration or further clarification of rubric expectations related to students' ability to articulate their own ethical values and frameworks. Overall, the high agreement percentages across most dimensions support the reliability of the scoring process, with targeted improvement recommended for Ethical Self-Awareness.

Table 4. *Scoring Agreement Percentage Among Raters for PR Skills Dimensions*

Dimension (Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric)	Percentages
Ethical Self-Awareness	76%
Ethical Issue Recognition	91%
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	80%
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	84%

Note: If values assigned by the raters differed by one point or less, it was counted as agreement. The agreement percentage was computed by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of ratings.

Apart from the simple percentage agreements, researchers widely measure the reliability of rating agreements between different raters to eliminate chance agreements. All raters who participated in the scoring process have advanced degrees and work experience and attended the same training just before the scoring session. Hence, the probability of chance agreement was very low, but inter-rater agreement was computed to follow best research practices. Inter-rater reliability is the consistency among raters when scoring the same subjects independently. The extent to which different raters agree on their judgments establishes the validity and credibility of measurements or ratings.

The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) determined the reliability of the inter-rater agreement levels. High ICC values indicate more agreement between rater scores. Commonly accepted guidelines were used to interpret the ICC results: the range of 0.40 to 0.74 is considered fair to good inter-rater agreement, with results above 0.74 classified as excellent inter-rater agreement and results lower than .40 considered poor inter-rater agreement (Fleiss, 1986; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). The dimensions with the highest ICC values, Personal and Social Responsibility (ICC= 0.55) and Global Self-Awareness (ICC = 0.45), showed good inter-rater agreement. The ICC values for the remaining four dimensions remained below 0.40. This low level of ICC suggests that applying the rubric to the assignment may not be aligned well. However, it needs further investigation to pinpoint the reason for low ICC values for those four dimensions (see Table 5).

Table 5. Intraclass Correlation Coefficient for Empirical and Quantitative Skills Dimensions

Dimension (EQS VALUE Rubric)	Coefficient
Ethical Self-Awareness	0.41
Ethical Issue Recognition	0.63
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	0.44
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	0.45

Note 1: *less than 0.40 = poor agreement; between .40 and .74 = fair to good agreement; greater than .74 = excellent agreement.*

Note 2: *The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated as a two-way random effects model. Values in this model type with random rater pairings are typically expected to be lower than those where rater pairings are fixed throughout the rating day.*

All four dimensions demonstrated fair to good agreement, with Ethical Issue Recognition showing the strongest reliability at 0.63. This suggests that raters were reasonably consistent in identifying whether students recognized ethical issues within the context of their assignments. The other three dimensions—Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (0.45), Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (0.44), and Ethical Self-Awareness (0.41)—also fell within the fair range but were on the lower end of the spectrum. These lower ICC values indicate greater variability among raters when scoring more subjective or introspective dimensions, such as evaluating students' self-awareness or their application of complex ethical frameworks. While these results indicate overall reliability in the scoring process, the relatively lower ICCs suggest the potential benefit of additional rater calibration sessions, particularly focused on dimensions involving personal reflection and ethical reasoning. Doing so may enhance scoring precision in future assessment cycles.

Students Performance

Table 6 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each dimension of the

Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric, based on a total of 175 student work samples. These scores reflect the overall proficiency demonstrated by students in various aspects of Personal Responsibility. Students met or exceeded the attainment target in two of the four dimensions assessed. The highest performance was observed in Ethical Issue Recognition (M = 2.16, SD = 0.63), indicating that students effectively recognized and articulated ethical issues within their assignments. Students also met the milestone-level attainment target in Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (M = 2.02, SD = 0.67), demonstrating proficiency in applying ethical frameworks to their analyses.

However, students scored below the attainment target in two dimensions: Ethical Self-Awareness (M = 1.75, SD = 0.73) and Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts (M = 1.61, SD = 0.65). These lower scores highlight challenges students faced in reflecting critically on their own ethical viewpoints and thoroughly evaluating alternative ethical perspectives.

Table 6. *Means for Personal Responsibility Skills Measure Scores*

Measurement Dimensions	N	Mean	SD
Ethical Self-Awareness	175	1.75	0.73
Ethical Issue Recognition	175	2.16	0.63
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	175	2.02	0.67
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	175	1.61	0.65

Overall, the data suggest students are effectively recognizing ethical issues and applying ethical frameworks, but targeted instructional improvements are needed to help students deepen their ethical self-awareness and evaluate diverse ethical perspectives more effectively.

Observations and Limitations

The Fall 2024 assessment of Personal Responsibility utilized student work samples from the ANTH 2322 (Global Culture) course, providing a diverse and representative undergraduate sample at UT Arlington. Participants primarily identified as Hispanic/Latino, with substantial representation also from Black/African American, White, and Asian students. The student demographics and course selection provided meaningful context for interpreting the performance results.

Key observations from this assessment indicate students successfully achieved the attainment target (mean ≥ 2.0) in Ethical Issue Recognition and Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, demonstrating their ability to identify ethical concerns and apply ethical frameworks effectively. Conversely, students struggled significantly in dimensions of Ethical Self-Awareness and Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, scoring below the milestone-level target. These results suggest instructional gaps in developing reflective skills and the ability to critically assess different ethical viewpoints. Enhanced classroom activities, reflective assignments, and explicit instructional guidance in these areas are recommended.

This assessment has several limitations. First, student samples were obtained from a single course (ANTH 2322 – Global Culture), limiting generalizability across the broader curriculum. Future assessments should incorporate student work from additional courses, particularly from disciplines emphasizing ethics and decision-making, to provide broader representation. Second, variations in Signature Assignment prompts and instructions may have influenced student performance, especially in dimensions requiring higher-level ethical reflection and evaluation. Ensuring clear alignment between assignments and rubric criteria could help students explicitly demonstrate proficiency in these dimensions.

Overall, while the assessment highlighted students' strengths in recognizing and applying ethical concepts, targeted instructional support and clearer assignment alignment are critical for addressing areas of lower performance and fully meeting the Personal Responsibility core objective.

References

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Appendix A: AAC&U Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric

ETHICAL REASONING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

Association of American Colleges and Universities

Definition

Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	 2	Benchmark 1
Ethical Self-Awareness	Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs and discussion has greater depth and clarity.	Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	Student states both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.	Student states either their core beliefs or articulates the origins of the core beliefs but not both.
~~**Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts**~~	~~Student names the theory or theories, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and accurately explains the details of the theory or theories used.~~	~~Student can name the major theory or theories she/he uses, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and attempts to explain the details of the theory or theories used, but has some inaccuracies.~~	~~Student can name the major theory she/he uses, and is only able to present the gist of the named theory.~~	~~Student only names the major theory she/he uses.~~
Ethical Issue Recognition	Student can recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context AND can recognize cross-relationships among the issues.	Student can recognize ethical issues when issues are presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) context OR can grasp cross-relationships among the issues.	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and grasp (incompletely) the complexities or interrelationships among the issues.	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or interrelationships.
Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student can independently apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider full implications of the application.	Student can independently (to a new example) apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, but does not consider the specific implications of the application.	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, independently (to a new example) and the application is inaccurate.	Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question with support (using examples, in a class, in a group, or a fixed-choice setting) but is unable to apply ethical perspectives/concepts independently (to a new example.).
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, and the student's defense is adequate and effective.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of, and respond to the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, but the student's response is inadequate.	Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts but does not respond to them (and ultimately objections, assumptions, and implications are compartmentalized by student and do not affect student's position.)	Student states a position but cannot state the objections to and assumptions and limitations of the different perspectives/concepts.