



**Rio Salado College
Assessment of Student Learning
Annual Report
2016-2017**

Introduction

Rio Salado College's first assessment plan was implemented in 1991. Since then, ongoing assessment initiatives aimed at increasing student learning have continued to demonstrate evidence of the College's central focus on this work. Student learning outcomes are measured in five core areas: Critical Thinking, Writing, Information Literacy, Reading, and Oral Communication. These outcomes are assessed at the College level, the program level (as part of Program Review) and via the continuous improvement Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle at the course level. Collectively, these efforts provide a solid infrastructure for assessing and increasing student learning at Rio Salado.

Over the years, the College's assessment plan has progressed from a static document that was reaffirmed on a periodic basis, to a dynamic, ongoing, and evolving series of activities that are integrated across the teaching and learning spectrum.

The Learning Assessment Team includes representation from Faculty Chairs, Senior Administration, Student Affairs, and Institutional Research, and has responsibility for coordinating all aspects of assessment of student learning.

The College maintains a public Assessment of Student Learning website so that the institution's assessment data and processes are transparent and available to all stakeholders. This site may be viewed at: <http://www.riosalado.edu/about/teaching-learning/assessment/Pages/SLO.aspx>

Overview

In AY2016-17, Rio applied for and received the Excellence in Assessment designation from the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). This award reflects the great work that takes place at many levels throughout the college and includes residential faculty, adjunct faculty, administrators and researchers. The award is also indicative of a fully-integrated approach to assessment from the program to the course to the assessment level.

The ETS Proficiency Profile was administered to a cohort of graduates in AY2016-17. Graduates who completed the online abbreviated form performed well in comparison to a national comparative cohort. They also performed better in the areas of Critical Thinking, Writing and Mathematics than Rio students who took the test in prior years.

Program review is continuing as scheduled, with additional closed programs being added to the schedule beginning in AY2017-18. Assessment work to improve both instruction and assessment has been ongoing throughout the year, utilizing results from the Assessment Data Display. Additional efforts are planned to focus on assessment results of students with developmental needs.

Student Learning Outcomes Work

Rio Salado College is committed to the assessment and improvement of the following College-wide Student Learning Outcomes:

- **Critical Thinking**
- **Writing**
- **Reading**
- **Information Literacy**
- **Oral Communication**

Assessment work focusing on two of these outcomes is detailed below.

Reading

In January 2017, four contextualized reading courses were added to the course offerings in the Rio Salado Reading and ESL department. The goal of these courses is to improve student comprehension and understanding of specific subject area content. Reading skills and strategies are taught using college level materials in various content areas that are meaningful and relevant to student's academic goals and areas of interest. The courses are:

RDG100-Successful College Reading

RDG111-Successful College Reading for Cultural or Social Sciences

RDG112-Successful College Reading for Life Sciences, Math, Physical Sciences or Technology

RDG113-Successful College Reading for Communication, Humanities or Behavioral Science

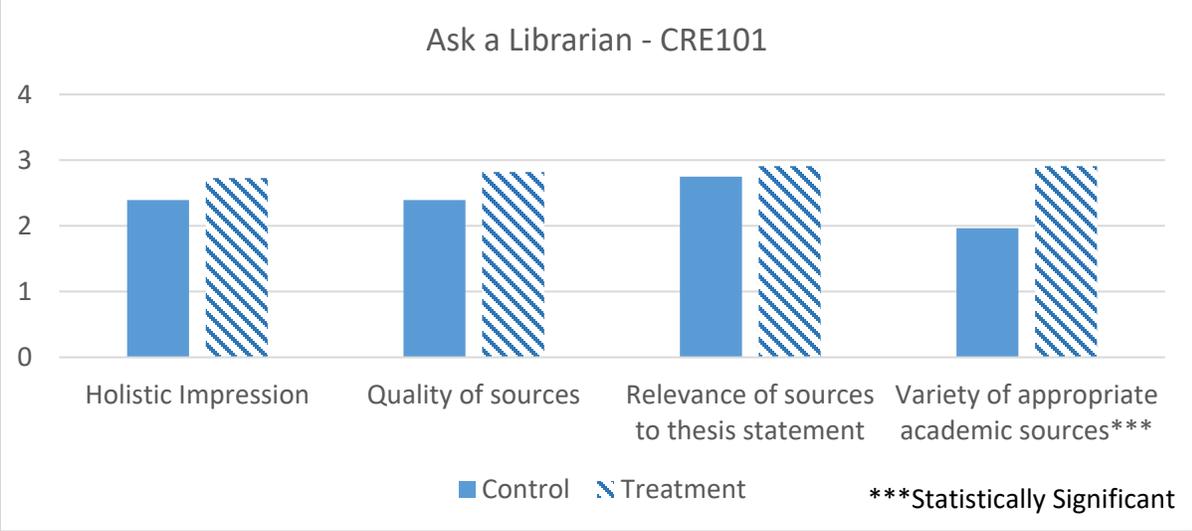
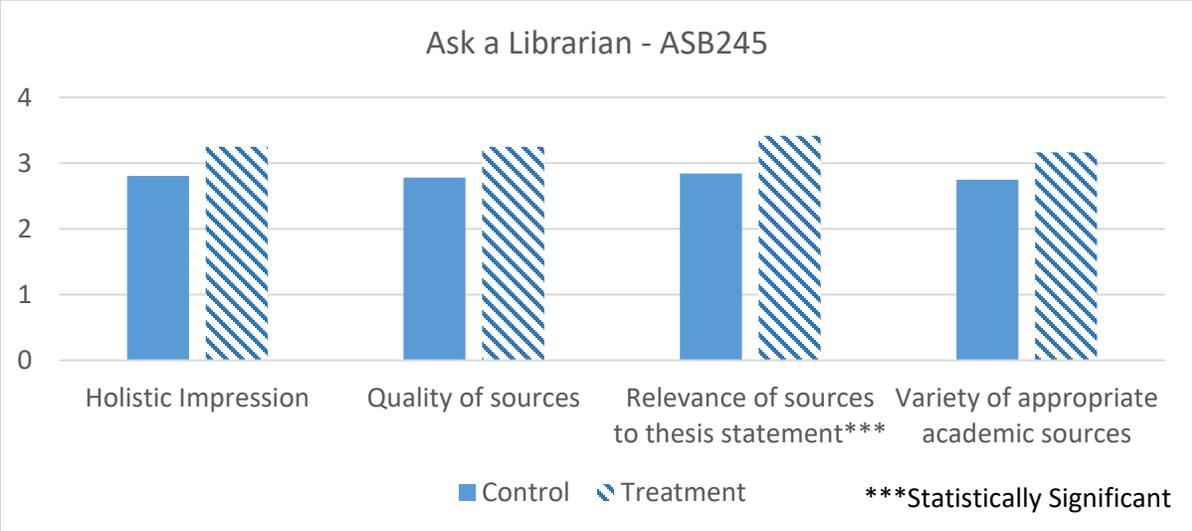
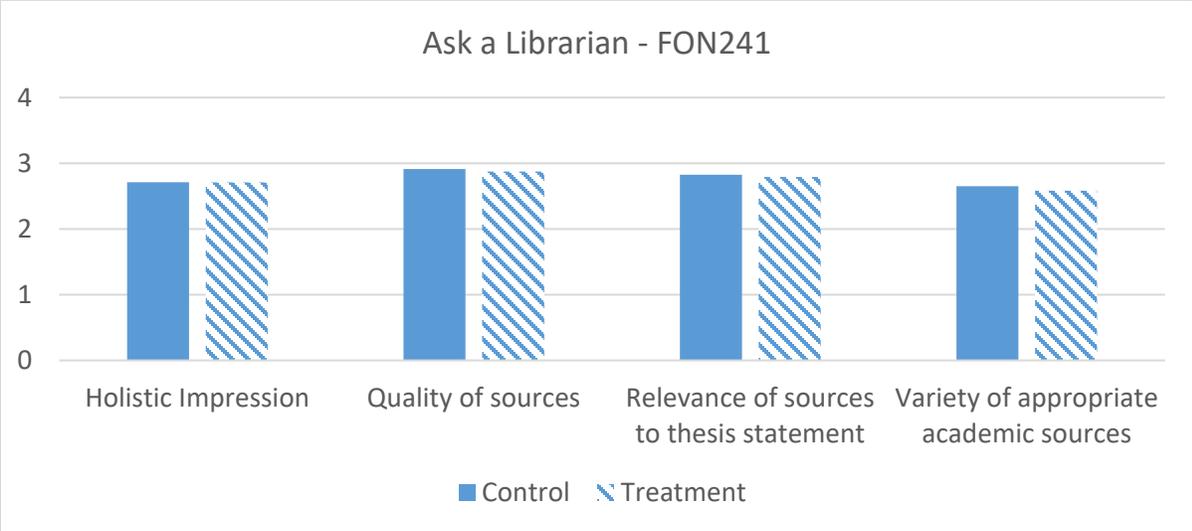
The courses were designed as co-requisites so students can immediately use the reading strategies they are learning in the concurrently enrolled college level course. At Rio, these courses are offered in an 8 week format to allow students to accelerate and move on to college level English and reading. All materials for the courses are OER which allow students to start learning on the first day of the course and provide cost savings for students. As added benefit to students who successfully complete a course, there is full credit on their transcript and the courses are accepted at all three state universities as elective credit.

Beginning in spring 2018, additional efforts related to assessing students with developmental needs will take place. After identifying developmental students, both through placement test results and course-taking behavior, college-wide student learning outcomes will be monitored, with the intent of identifying assessments where developmental students are struggling to meet the outcomes.

Information Literacy

The Ask a Librarian 24/7 Chat service has long been a convenient way for students to get live, professional library research help at any time, day or night. A study was conducted in 2016-17 to test the impact of using this service on student performance in the area of Information Literacy. Select courses from Glendale Community College, Paradise Valley Community College and Rio Salado College were set up to compare student research papers in two identical sections of the same course in the same modality (i.e., in-person, hybrid, online); one section was required to use Ask a Librarian for help finding sources for an assignment, while the other section was not. Library faculty evaluated anonymized student reference lists and chat transcripts for those required to use the service, employing a normed rubric to score the quality of sources.

For two of the three courses studied, statistically-significant findings indicated that students who used Ask a Librarian were better at selecting a variety of appropriate academic sources relevant to their theses compared with students who did not use Ask a Librarian. Further research on the impact of the Ask a Librarian service is ongoing with participating colleges using CRE101 courses to improve project consistency.



Excellence in Assessment

The National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Excellence in Assessment designation is conferred upon colleges and universities that demonstrate the deliberate and systemic institution-wide integration of assessment efforts. Rio Salado College applied for the designation in 2016, the inaugural year, but was unsuccessful. Although Rio has a robust, long-standing tradition of assessing student learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional level, the focus of the EIA application process is not on the reporting of achievement data. Rather, as was shared in the NILOA reviewer feedback and the Excellence in Assessment presentation at the 2016 HLC Annual Conference, successful EIA applications clearly demonstrate alignment of campus processes and utilization of assessment data.

Consequently, the college application in 2017 better represented how the collaborative assessment practices align with the mission and structure of Rio Salado College, and how assessment data is used to improve student learning across the institution. Of special note is Rio's systematic and intentional integration of adjunct faculty members in assessment work, which was highlighted in the reviewer feedback for both applications. Rio was awarded the designation for successfully integrating assessment practices throughout the college.

To read Rio's full application, go to: <http://www.riosalado.edu/about/teaching-learning/assessment/Documents/2017-EIA-Application-Rio-Salado.pdf>

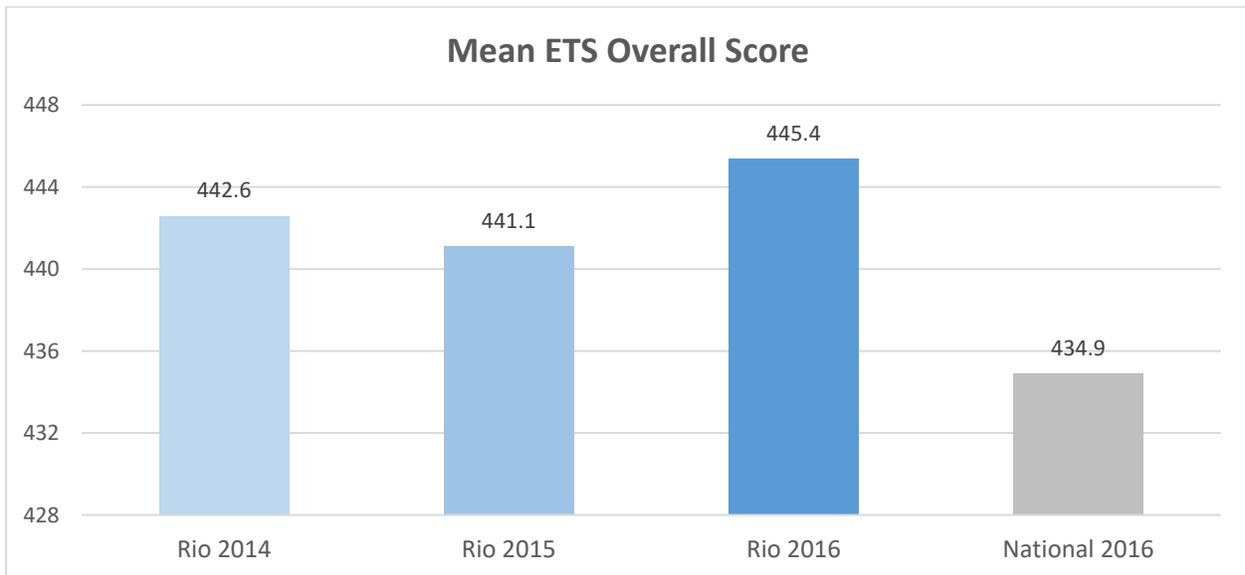
The ETS (Educational Testing Service) Proficiency Profile

In assessing institution-level student learning outcomes, Rio Salado College utilizes the ETS Proficiency Profile, a nationally-standardized assessment designed to measure academic competence in the domains of *Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing* and *Mathematics*. Additionally, the reading and critical thinking domains are aligned with three academic content areas: *Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences*.

Rio Salado College has engaged in ETS assessments for the past eight years. The platform provides the college with an externally-validated assessment of outcomes and allows for comparison analyses to peer institutions across the country. Historically, however, the college has struggled to generate a consistent volume of responses from a representative sample of students.

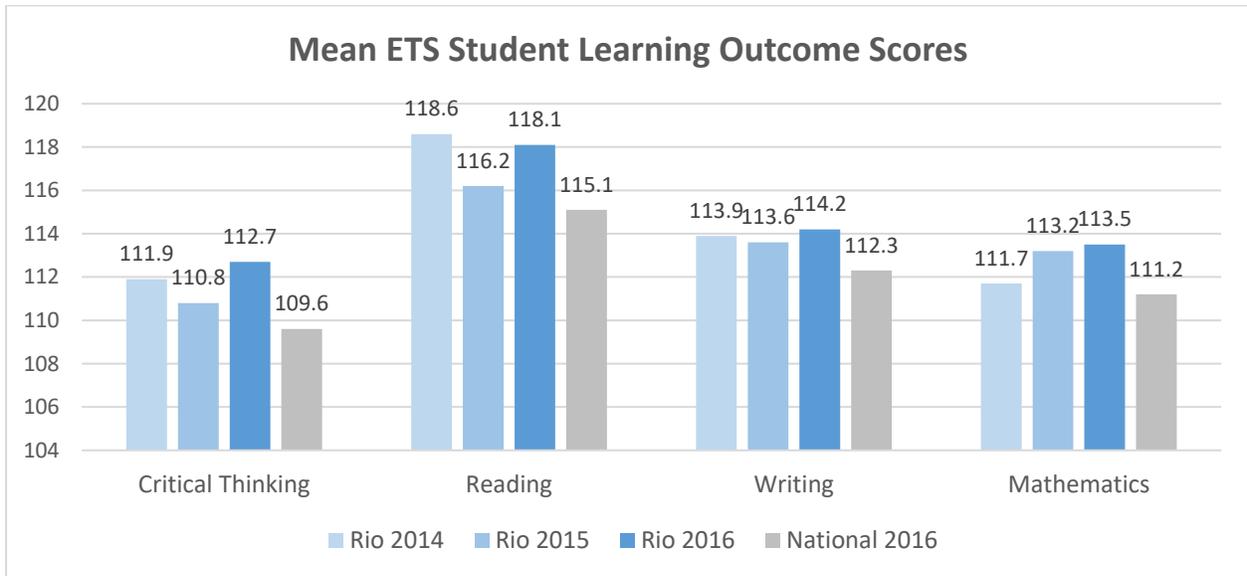
For 2016-17, only recent Rio graduates were invited to participate and incentivized with a \$25 Amazon gift card. 757 students were invited to take the assessment with 53 completing for a response rate of 7%. The response group was not seen as representative of the larger graduating class as white students, female students, and students under the age of 30 were overrepresented among respondents.

Overall, Rio Salado's total mean score for the 2016-17 ETS administration was 445.4 (out of 500). This represents both an increase from Rio's two most recent ETS administrations in 2014 and 2015, as well as a strong performance against the 2016 ETS comparative cohort of 28 Associate's degree-granting institutions from across the United States:

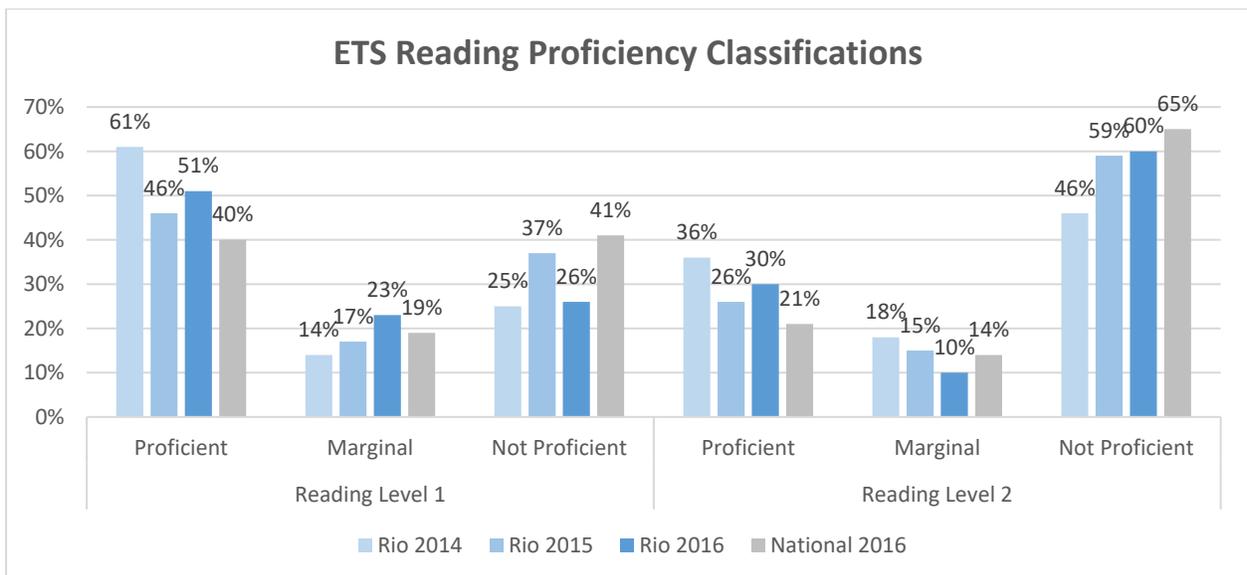


When analyzing the results more granularly, Rio Salado's 2016-17 ETS respondent cohort generally outperformed comparison groups across all four student learning outcome domains. The exception to this coming from Rio's 2014 cohort, which outperformed this year's

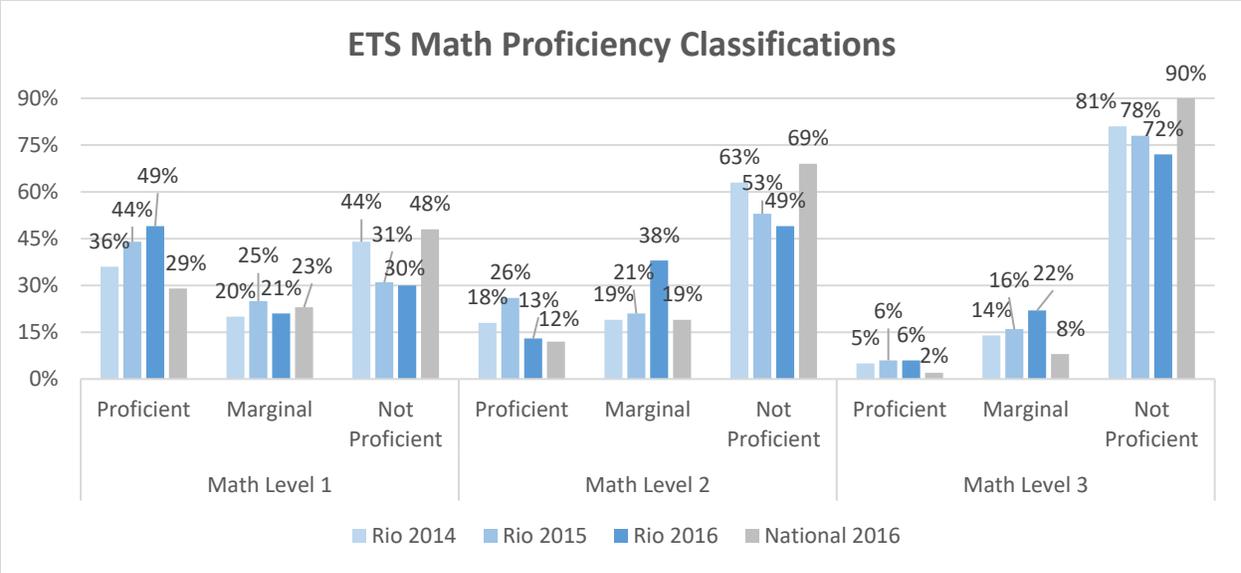
respondents in the *Reading* competency. Further analysis highlights that the 2014 assessment cohort outperformed this year's cohort within the *Humanities* academic content area:



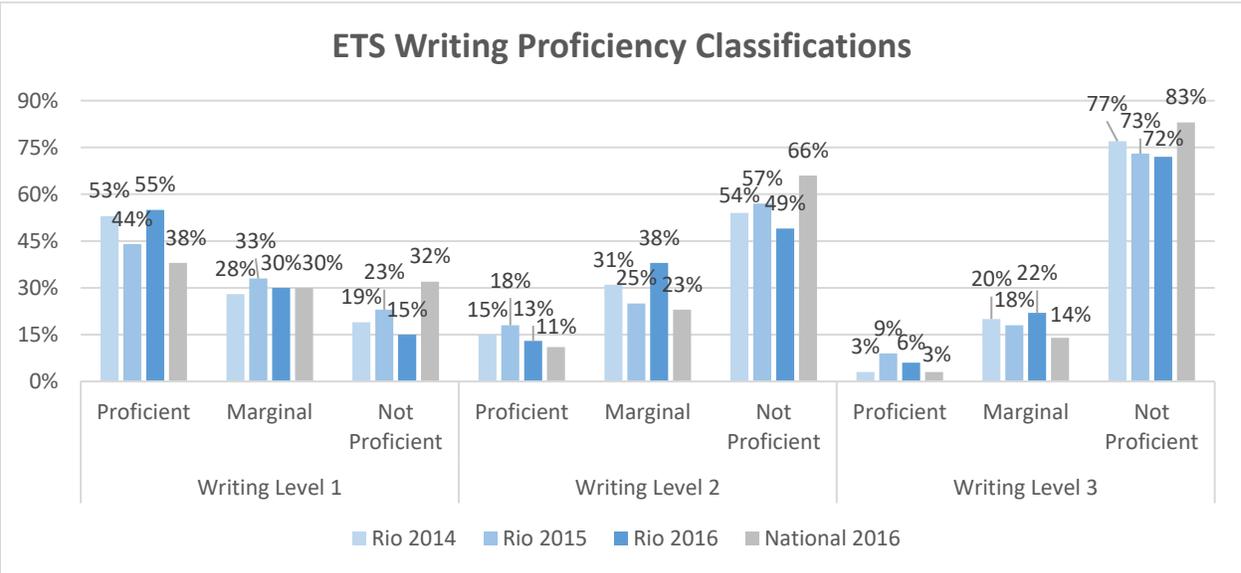
Proficiency classifications and difficulty levels within each of the four learning outcome domains provide further insight into student performance on the ETS. Within the *Reading* competency, the 2016-17 cohort performed well against comparative cohorts at both levels of difficulty. Within *Reading* level 1, however, the total percentage of students occupying the *Marginal* level of proficiency grew higher than expected:



Within the *Mathematics* competency, the 2016-17 cohort again showed strong performance against comparative cohorts at all three levels of difficulty. Within *Mathematics* levels 2 and 3, however, the total proportion of *Marginal* students highlights room for improvement:



For the 2016-17 Rio ETS cohort, the *Writing* competency exhibited the weakest performance against comparative cohorts. While performance was high within level 1, scores in levels 2 and 3 were down when compared to both last year’s Rio cohort as well as the 2016 National comparison group:



In general, results from the 2016-17 Rio Salado ETS administration indicate that this year’s test cohort performed well against comparison groups. While these findings tend to illustrate gains in student learning, it must be noted that this year’s test group was not determined to be a representative of either the 2016-17 graduating class or the larger student body. Furthermore, subscale analyses indicated that while a larger proportion of students were seen as competent within the various learning domains, a larger share of 2016-17 testers occupied the *Marginal* levels of proficiency thus putting them at a higher risk of testing into the *Not Proficient* level. Future test administrations should focus on increasing the response rate and

representativeness of test groups and/or targeting administrations toward specialty populations such as Dual Enrollment or Adult Basic Education students.

Program Review

Rio Salado College has adopted and implemented a formal Program Review model and process that is systematic, comprehensive, and sustainable. Every review contains the same foundational components, including program goals, student learning outcomes, program resources, and co-curricular outcomes, which are addressed by utilizing a template of questions and data sets. The Program Chair highlights best practices, areas for improvement, and recommendations for future actions. Learning Assessment Team members examine the completed review and provide feedback, which is then submitted to the Vice President of Academic Affairs for final action. Once a review has been completed, an Executive Summary Report is posted to the [Rio Salado Assessment public website](#).

During AY2016-17, reviews were completed for the following programs

- General Education
- Military Leadership
- Addictions and Substance Use Disorders
- Teacher Education Fine Arts Post Baccalaureate

Five additional programs are scheduled to undergo comprehensive review during AY2017-18.

RioLOGs

Rio Learning Outcomes Grants (RioLOGs) provide a mechanism and the resources to support Faculty Chairs in developing student learning outcomes-based initiatives that directly link to assessment data. The instructional initiatives or projects proposed for RioLOG funding require the involvement of adjunct faculty members.

During AY2016-17, contracts totaling \$10,253.52 were paid to adjunct faculty members across various disciplines to support the College's assessment efforts. Notable projects include content and assessment alignment work in online Biology Concepts courses (BIO100), integration of the college-wide Critical Thinking Rubric in online sections of Healthful Living (HES100) and Introduction to Nursing and Health Care Systems (HCR220), and the development of enhanced assessments for co-curricular Honors students in Adobe Photoshop Level II: Advanced Digital Imaging (CIS220DF), Internet/Web Development Level II (CIS233DA), and Corporate Law for the Paralegal (PAR235).

Significant Accomplishments in Learning Assessment Work, 2016-17

- Rio was awarded the Excellence in Assessment designation sponsored by the Voluntary System for Accountability (VSA), the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).
- The 17th Annual Assessment and Learning Experience meetings were held on January 26th and 28th, 2017, with over 540 adjunct faculty members attending.
- The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) published an article by Dr. Angela Felix titled "[A College Where Adjuncts Are Not Just Add-ons](#)" which highlights the involvement of Rio adjunct faculty in college-wide assessment activities.
- Thirteen Outstanding Adjunct Faculty were recognized for *Contributions to Assessment of Student Learning* for AY2016-17. The Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Reception was held on October 11, 2017.
- A Rio team attended the Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference in Chicago in April, 2017.
- Over \$10,000 was spent on RioLOG course-level assessment work.
- Four Program Reviews were completed.
- Adjunct faculty completed 169 AFD workshops during AY2016-17.
- Fifty six Rio students participated in the Ask a Librarian assessment project.
- Fifty three Rio graduates participated in the ETS Proficiency Profile in AY2016-17.
- Contextualized reading courses were offered to students placing into developmental reading in Fall 2016.
- A video highlighting Rio's assessment efforts was created and shared at the all-faculty meeting. This video is also available on Rio's public website at <http://www.riosalado.edu/about/teaching-learning/assessment/Pages/SLO.aspx>
- Dr. Angela Felix & Dustin Maroney presented Rio's Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Data Display at the Arizona Assessment Conference in April 2017.
- The Learning Assessment Report was compiled and posted to the Learning Assessment SharePoint and Adjunct Faculty SharePoint sites for access by residential faculty, adjunct faculty, and College employees.
- The Learning Assessment Report will be presented to all adjunct faculty during the January, 2018, Spring All Faculty Assessment and Learning Experience, and posted to the College's Public Website.

Learning Assessment Team Members

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Zach Lewis, Coordinator, Institutional Effectiveness