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Development and Validation of a Discipline-Independent Research Product Rubric Alligned with the Research Skill Development Framework

Timothy D. Champion
Johnson C Smith University, tchampion@jcsu.edu

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Abstract:
The Quality Enhancement Plan at JCSU is focused on Undergraduate Research. Students will be producing many research products; the ultimate product is their Senior Investigative Paper (SIP). Individual programs have rubrics for the assessment of these SIPs and other products. A need was perceived for a single rubric that could be applied across disciplines that focused on the facets of research as described in the Research Skill Development Framework (RSDF), cross-referenced by the quality of the product. A rubric was drafted, piloted, and revised. A study involving 18 faculty reviewing 24 past SIPs was conducted to establish reliability and validity.

Introduction:
The current Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) is “Cultivating a Culture and Curriculum for Undergraduate Research.” Students produce many research products, such as papers, performances and creative works. The ultimate product is the Senior Investigative Paper (SIP), which has been required for graduation at JCSU for nearly 30 years. While individual programs have rubrics for the assessment of these SIPs and other products, we perceived the need for a single rubric that could be applied across all disciplines focused on the facets of research as described in the Research Skill Development Framework (RSDF) (Willison & O’Regan, 2006).

Methods:
A rubric (Figure 2) was drafted, piloted, and revised. A study involving 18 JCSU faculty reviewing 24 pseudo-randomly selected past SIPs was conducted to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument. Of the 24 papers, 12 had been randomly selected from those published between 1993-2008 in the JCSU Undergraduate Research Journal (JCSUURJ). These were published in the JCSUURJ after nomination by their program and selection by a team of faculty editors. The other 12 papers were randomly selected from SIPs accepted in the same discipline that year which were not selected for the JCSUURJ.

Results:
Paired t-tests of each category of the RPR determined that the JCSUURJ papers were significantly (p < 0.001; n=204) evaluated as being of higher quality than the non-JCSUURJ papers (Figure 3).

Creation of a rubric that could span multiple disciplines was a considerable challenge. Rubric Clarification Notes for various disciplines were also developed and shared to all faculty to aid in the use of this rubric. Many programs are incorporating the RPR in their assessment activities. This rubric will be used to evaluate samples of JCSU Senior Papers completed prior to, during, and after the implementation of the QEP to provide a high-level assessment of the program.

References:

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