



UNIVERSITY OF  
SAN FRANCISCO

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Office of Assessment  
and Accreditation Support

## Written Communication & Critical Thinking Core Graduation Competencies Report

July 2023

## Table of Contents

<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Sample .....	3
Faculty Raters.....	3
Rubric.....	3
Data Analysis.....	3
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
written communication .....	4
Critical thinking .....	4
<b>Written Communication.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Average Performance Level .....	4
Overall Performance Level.....	5
Performance Level by Area or School .....	5
<b>Critical Thinking.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Average Performance Level .....	7
Overall Performance Level.....	7
Performance Level by Area or School .....	8
<b>Inter-rater Reliability.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Overview

The Written Communication and Critical Thinking core graduation competency assessment occurred on June 12 and 13, 2023, in-person at the Hilltop campus. Faculty raters reviewed assignments written by graduating seniors in their final semester at USF using a rubric designed by the rhetoric and language faculty. In order to improve rater consistency, each day began with a norming session, whereby all faculty in attendance rated three papers (one from the School of Management [SOM], one from the School of Nursing and Health Professions [SONHP] and one from the College of Arts & Sciences [CAS]). Faculty were also provided with a summary of each assignment and the assignment prompt, if there was one, in order to assist in determining assignment expectations.

75% of graduating seniors were expected to meet or exceed standards set by faculty.

## Methods

### SAMPLE

Student artifacts were collected from thirteen<sup>1</sup> programs across the three discipline areas within CAS—Arts & Humanities, Math & Sciences, and Social Sciences— graduating the highest percentages of students, as well as the BS Business Administration program within SOM and the BS Nursing program within SONHP.

A total of 452 artifacts were collected; 164 from CAS, 200 from SOM, and 88 from SONHP. When fewer than 5 artifacts were collected for a given course, those artifacts were not scored. In one instance, 32 artifacts were collected for one course within CAS, only the artifacts due at the end of the course were used, resulting in 12 artifacts for that course scored. For SOM, a random sample of 32 artifacts were scored (16 from each faculty member teaching the BSBA capstone course). For SONHP, a random sample of 30 artifacts were scored.

In total, 138 artifacts from CAS, 32 from SOM and 30 from SONHP were scored for a total of 200 artifacts. Papers used for norming are included in the total.

### FACULTY RATERS

Twelve faculty served as raters on June 12 and fourteen served as raters on June 13. Raters were a mix of full-time and adjunct faculty from CAS, SOM, and SONHP. Two raters scored each artifact. Consensus was considered achieved when agreement was perfect or within one point. In the cases in which consensus was not achieved on any of the 5 criteria, an additional rater scored the artifact.

### RUBRIC

Faculty raters scored student work using an integrated written communication and critical thinking rubric developed by Rhetoric & Language faculty (see appendix). Written communication was composed of three criteria: context, organization, and style. Critical thinking was composed of two criteria: assumptions and position. Raters scored each artifact using a 4-pt. scale (1 = *Unsatisfactory*, 2 = *Developing*, 3 = *Competent*, 4 = *Exemplary*). Artifacts met or exceeded standards when rated as competent or exemplary.

### DATA ANALYSIS

- If just two raters scored a paper on a particular criterion, the score assigned to the paper on that criterion was the mean of the two ratings.
- If the two raters disagreed by more than one point in their score on any criteria, a third rater scored that criterion.
- If three raters scored a criterion, the score assigned to that criterion was the average of the two closest ratings and the outlying score was discarded. When the third rater's score was no more than one integer from both initial ratings all three scores were averaged.

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<sup>1</sup> The thirteen programs from which papers were collected in the College of Arts & Sciences are: English, History, Performing Arts & Social Justice, Philosophy, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Kinesiology, International Studies, Communications, Politics, Psychology, and Sociology.

- Papers scored during the norming session were scored by 12-14 raters, the score assigned to a particular dimension was the average of all ratings. Papers scored during the norming session are included in the overall average scores, but are not included in the inter-rater reliability calculation.
- Inter-rater reliability was calculated using only the scores of the first two raters. Papers used for norming were not included in the calculation.

## Summary

### WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- USF students generally met or exceeded expectations for written communication. There was, however, variability at the area/school level. CAS and SONHP exceeded expectations in all areas of written communication (context, organization, and style) while SOM did not meet standards for context or organization. Only 72% of SOM student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context and only 56% met or exceeded standards for organization.
- On average, context and style were rated more highly than organization.

### CRITICAL THINKING

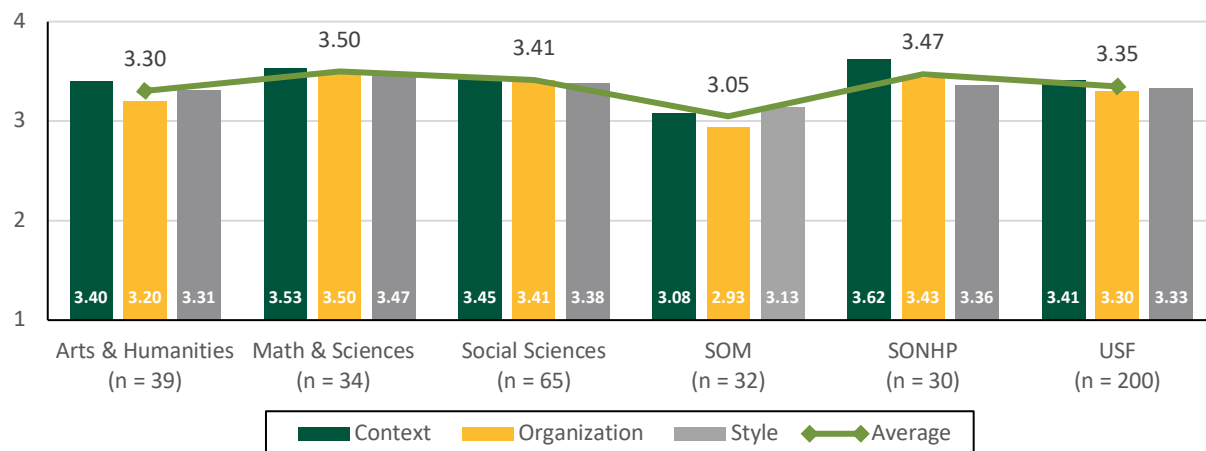
- USF students generally met or exceeded expectations for critical thinking. However, there was variability at the area/school level. CAS and SONHP exceeded expectations in all areas of critical thinking (assumptions and position) while SOM did not meet expectations for assumptions. Only 63% of SOM student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions.
- On average, position was rated more highly than assumptions.

## Written Communication

### AVERAGE PERFORMANCE LEVEL

The following figure depicts the average performance level of each area or school on the three written communication criteria (context, organization, and style). Across all criteria:

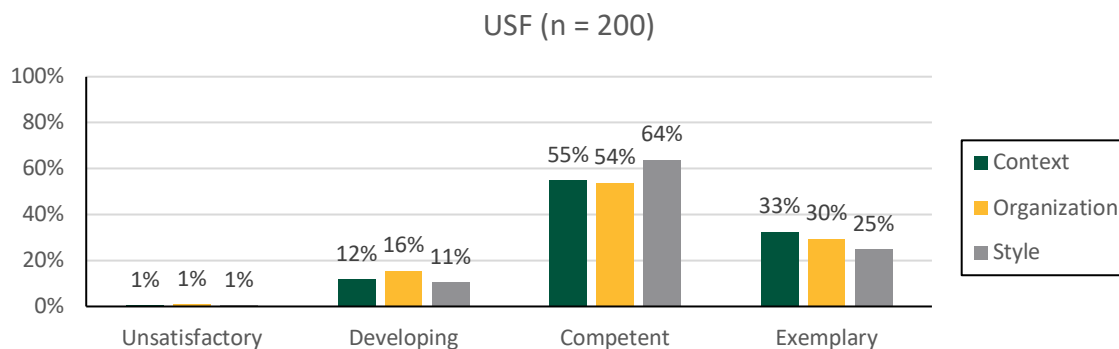
- Arts & Humanities scored an average of 3.30, with means ranging between 3.20 (organization) and 3.40 (context).
- Math & Sciences scored an average of 3.50, with means ranging between 3.47 (style) and 3.53 (context).
- Social Sciences scored an average of 3.41, with means ranging between 3.38 (style) and 3.45 (context).
- School of Management scored an average of 3.05, with means ranging between 2.93 (organization) and 3.13 (style).
- School of Nursing & Health Professions scored an average of 3.47, with means ranging between 3.36 (style) and 3.62 (context).



### OVERALL PERFORMANCE LEVEL

The following figure depicts the percentage of each performance level for all artifacts assessed. Artifacts met or exceeded standards when rated competent or exemplary.

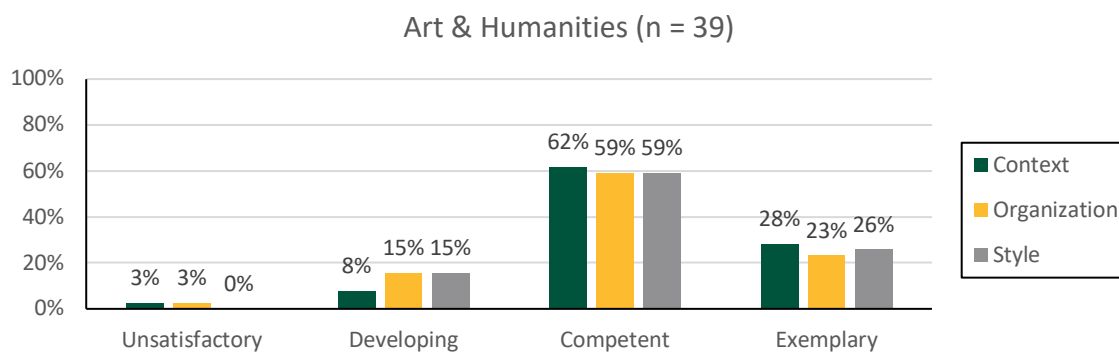
- Overall, 88% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context, 84% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 89% met or exceeded standards for style.

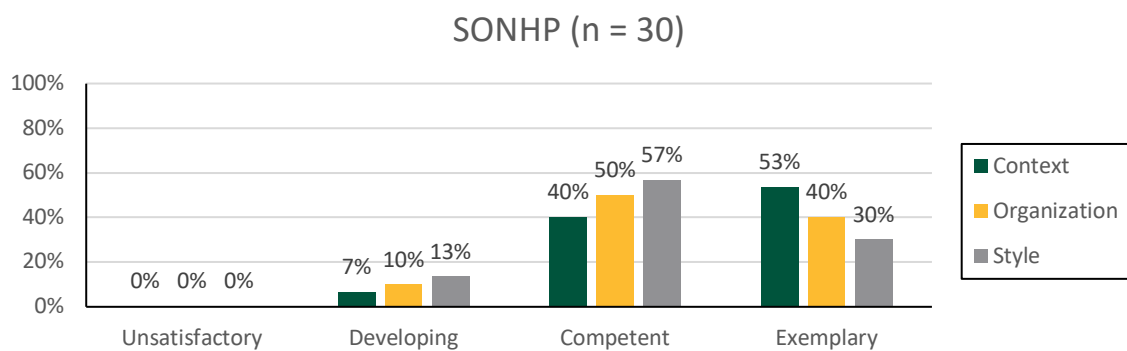
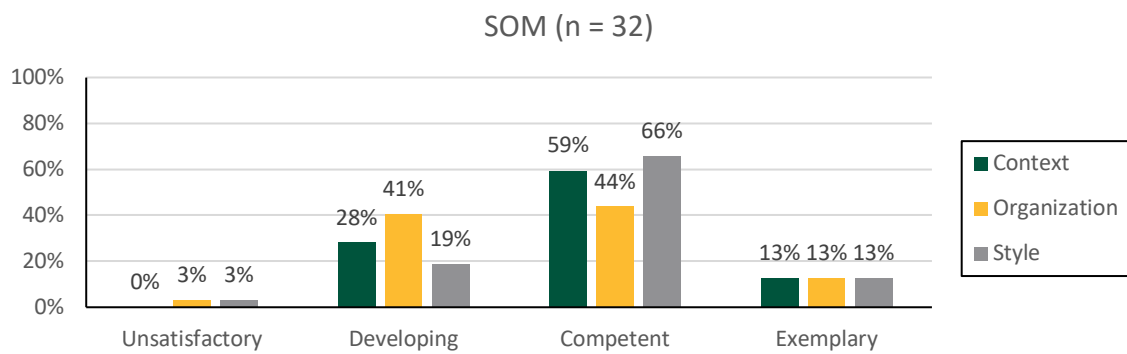
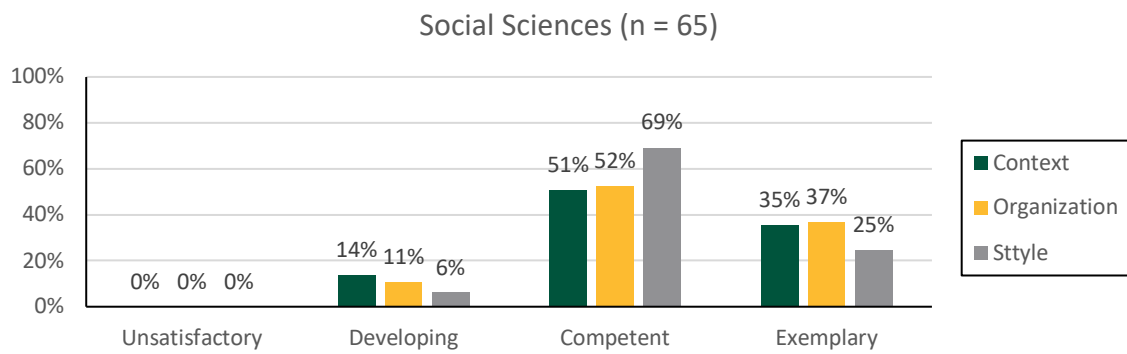
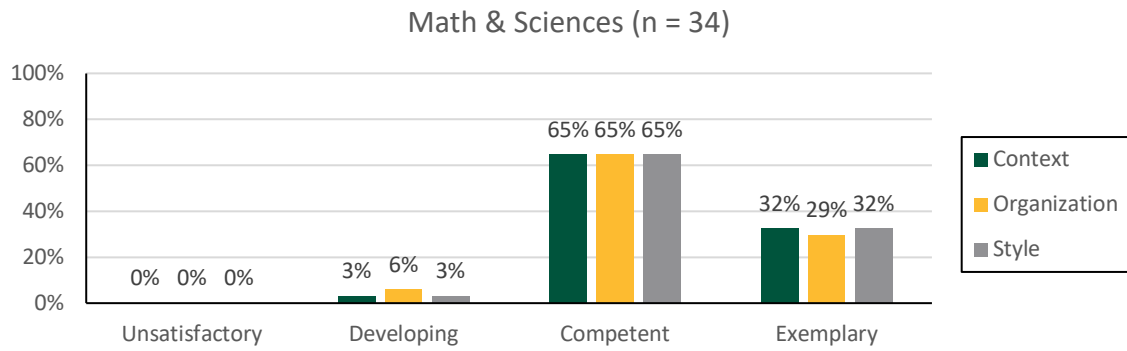


### PERFORMANCE LEVEL BY AREA OR SCHOOL

The following figures depict the percentage of each performance level for written communication broken down by area or school. Artifacts met or exceeded standards when rated competent or exemplary.

- For Arts & Humanities, 90% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context, 82% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 85% met or exceeded standards for style.
- For Math & Sciences, 97% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context, 94% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 97% met or exceeded standards for style.
- For Social Sciences, 86% of student artifacts met or exceeded standard for context, 89% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 94% met or exceeded standards for style.
- For SOM, 72% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context, 56% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 78% met or exceeded standards for style.
- For SONHP, 93% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for context, 90% met or exceeded standards for organization, and 87% met or exceeded standards for style.



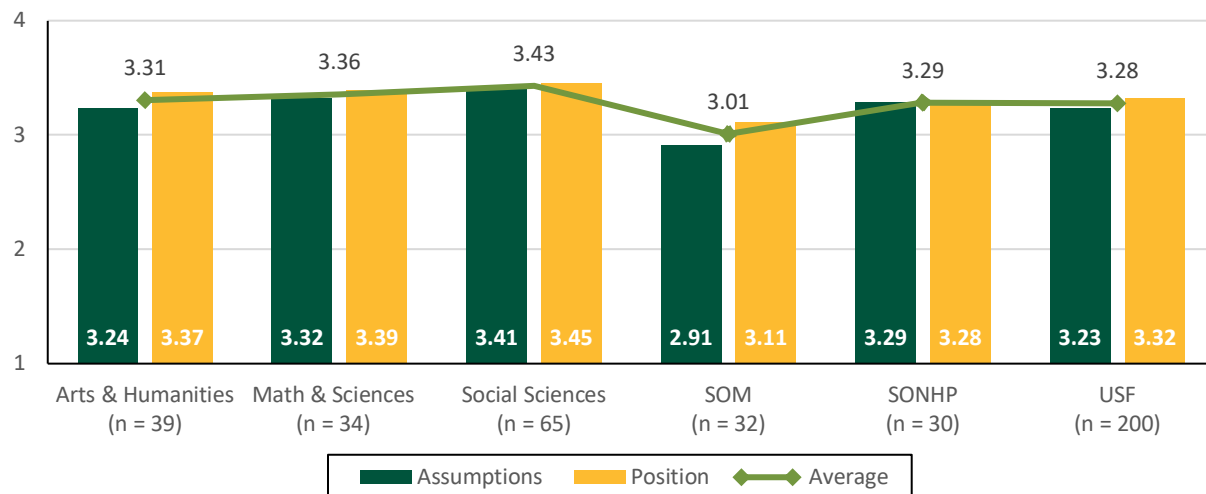


## Critical Thinking

### AVERAGE PERFORMANCE LEVEL

The following figure depicts the average performance level of each area or school on the two critical thinking criteria (assumptions and position). Across all criteria:

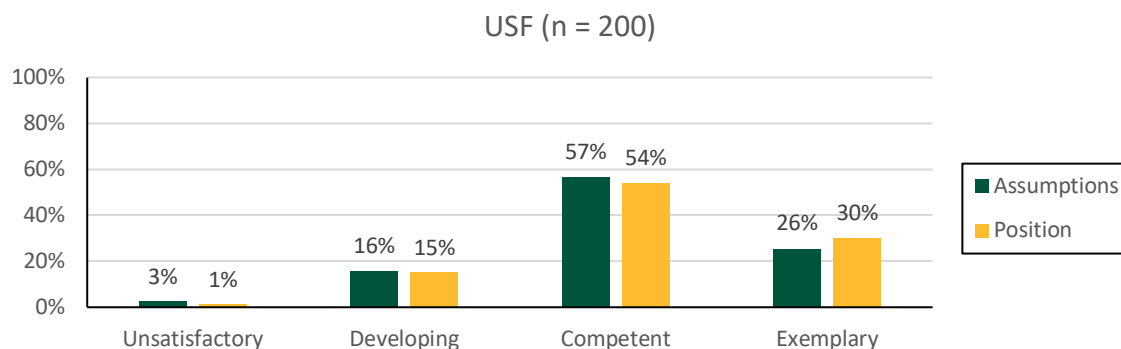
- Arts & Humanities scored an average of 3.31, with means ranging between 3.24 (assumptions) and 3.37 (position).
- Math & Sciences scored an average of 3.36, with means ranging between 3.32 (assumptions) and 3.39 (position).
- Social Sciences scored an average of 3.43, with means ranging between 3.41 (assumptions) and 3.45 (position).
- School of Management scored an average of 3.01, with means ranging between 2.91 (assumptions) and 3.11 (position).
- School of Nursing & Health Professions scored an average of 3.29, with means ranging between 3.28 (position) and 3.29 (assumptions).



### OVERALL PERFORMANCE LEVEL

The following figure depicts the percentage of each performance level for all artifacts assessed. Artifacts met or exceeded standards when rated competent or exemplary.

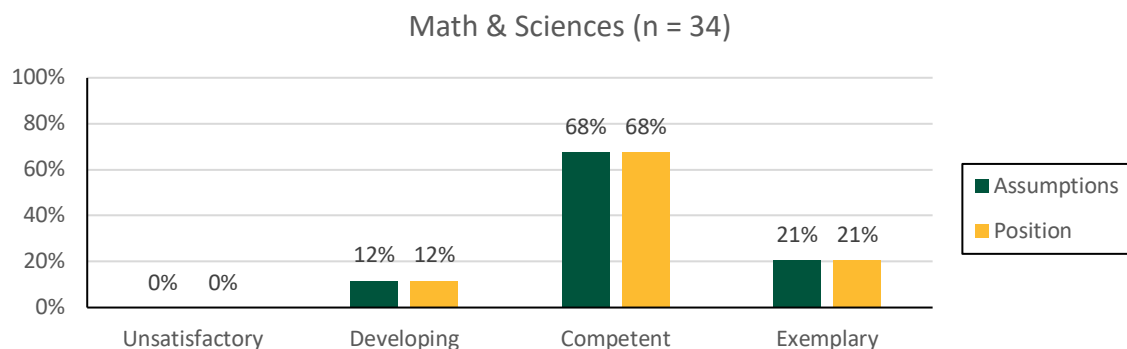
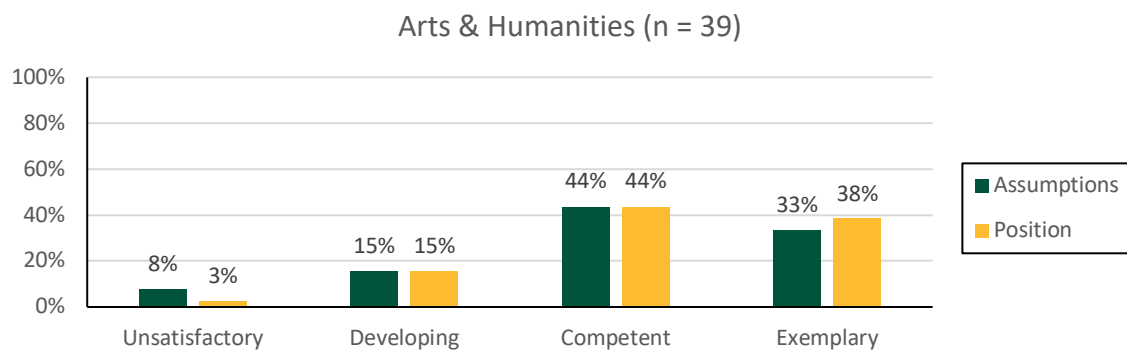
- Overall, 82% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions and 84% met or exceeded standards for position.



## PERFORMANCE LEVEL BY AREA OR SCHOOL

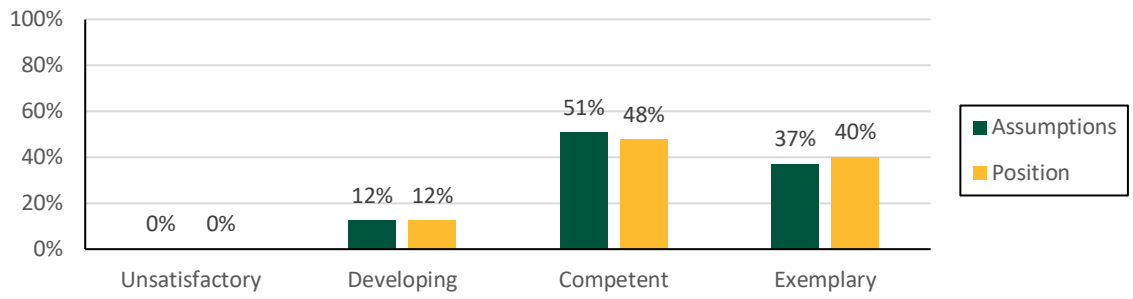
The following figures depict the percentage of each performance level for critical thinking broken down by area or school. Artifacts met or exceeded standards when rated competent or exemplary.

- For Arts & Humanities, 77% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions, 82% met or exceeded standards for position.
- For Math & Sciences, 88% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions, 88% met or exceeded standards for position.
- For Social Sciences, 88% of student artifacts met or exceeded standard for assumptions, 88% met or exceeded standards for position.
- For SOM, 63% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions, 75% met or exceeded standards for position.
- For SONHP, 90% of student artifacts met or exceeded standards for assumptions, 83% met or exceeded standards for position.

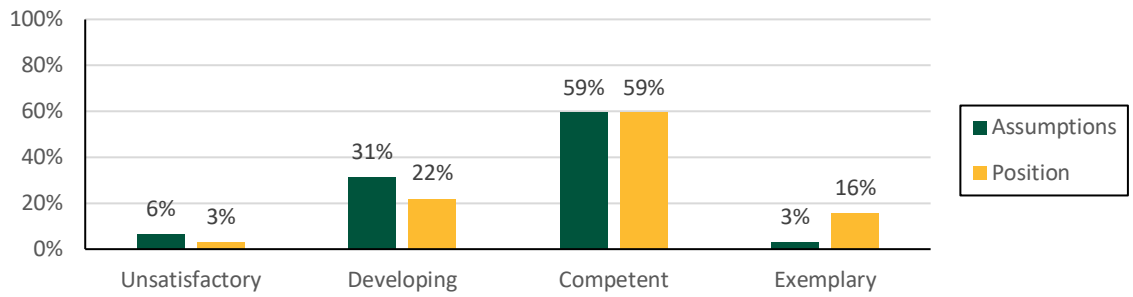




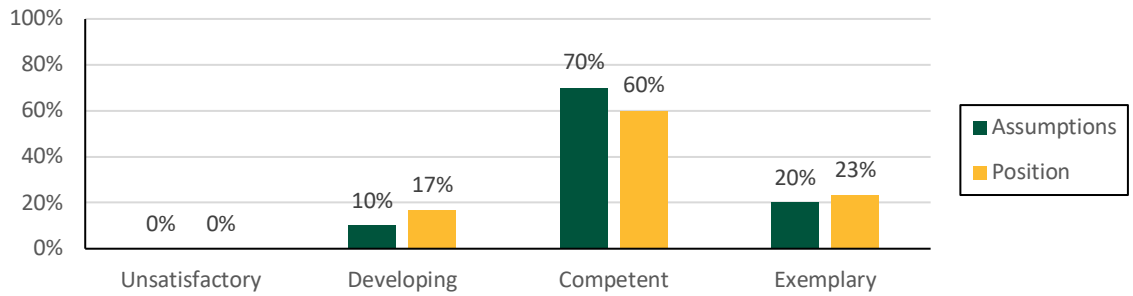
Social Sciences (n = 65)



SOM (n = 32)



SONHP (n = 30)



## Inter-rater Reliability

As agreed upon during the norming sessions, consensus was achieved when agreement was perfect or within one point. Inter-rater reliability across artifacts was high. On average, raters reached consensus 98% of the time. The following figure depicts the percentage of ratings that were perfect or within one point.

