



**MADISON COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT #3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

for

2015-2016

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The Madison Collaborative (MC) Annual Technical Report reflects students' ethical reasoning skills, attitudes toward ethical reasoning, and the effect of the Madison Collaborative on these skills and attitudes, thus far. Note that the 2015-2016 academic year is "Year 3" of the Madison Collaborative intervention plan (i.e., Annual Technical Report #3), reflecting the first phase of longitudinal data collection.

Several assessment results suggest gains regarding students' ethical reasoning skills and attitudes; however, many of these gains were not practically significant. These findings are expected given only one mandatory ethical reasoning intervention is in place thus far (i.e., *It's Complicated*), and this intervention occurs only once during the beginning of students' first-year experience.

Encouragingly, in Annual Technical Reports #1, #2, and #3, initial validity evidence for all four Madison Collaborative assessment instruments was provided. Moreover, for three of the four Madison Collaborative assessment instruments, scores continue to demonstrate adequate reliability across multiple cohorts of students.

In subsequent years, more interventions will ideally be in place and a greater number of faculty will be integrating the Madison Collaborative 8 KQ framework into their curricula. Thus, students will receive increased exposure through a greater number of MC interventions. What follows is a snapshot of the results collected during the third full year of longitudinal data collection.

How did students perform on the Ethical Reasoning Recall Test (ERRT) post *It's Complicated*?

On average, incoming first-year students were able to recall about 5 of the 8 key question words. The easiest key question to recall was *Fairness* and the most difficult were *Liberty* and *Character*. On average, incoming first-year students were able to correctly explain 3 of the 8 key questions. On average, second-year students were able to recall about 1 of the 8 key question words. *Authority* and *Rights* were the most difficult KQ words to recall, while *Responsibilities* was the easiest. On average, second-year students were able to correctly explain 1 of the 8 key questions.

How are students' Ethical Reasoning Identification Test (ERIT) scores changing over time?

Spring 2016 represented our second **longitudinal** data collection point *for students that received the *It's Complicated* training prior to completing the ERIT*. Thus, we were able to compare students' ERIT scores as entering first-year students in fall 2014 to their ERIT scores as second-year students in spring 2016. On average, students' ERIT total scores were not statistically significantly different from fall 2014 to spring 2016.

This finding was somewhat expected given there were no *required* interventions between the time students completed the ERIT in fall 2014 and when these same students completed the ERIT again in spring 2016. We might not expect to see large improvements in ERIT scores given the absence of additional required exposure to the Madison Collaborative and the 8 KQ framework. Yet, it is encouraging that students' ethical reasoning skills, as measured by the ERIT, are not decreasing over time from the beginning of their first year to the middle of their second year.

How well were first- and second-year students able to apply the ethical reasoning process?

Overall, first- and second-year students scored a little above “Marginal” on the Ethical Reasoning Writing Essay Rubric (ER-WR). Similar to other cohort years, the easiest rubric element for students was A (*Identify ethical issue in its context*).

First-year students who entered JMU in fall 2015 earned higher ER-WR rubric scores than second-year students assessed during spring 2016; the magnitude of these differences was moderate. The first-year fall 2015 student cohort and second-year spring 2016 student cohort both experienced the *It's Complicated* intervention.

How are students’ abilities to apply the ethical reasoning process changing over time?

Students who completed the ER-WR essay during fall 2014 were the same students who completed the ER-WR essay in spring 2016. On average, students did not score statistically significantly higher when they were assessed as first-year students in fall 2014 than they did when they were assessed as second-year students in spring 2016. This finding suggests that students’ performance on the ER-WR rubric might not be changing significantly from first-year to second-year, on average.

What are first- and second-year students’ attitudes and behaviors regarding ethical reasoning?

On average, first- and second-year students rated ethical reasoning skills relatively high (compared to other skills), and similarly to: critical thinking, oral communication, and time-management skills. First- and second-year students tended to “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that ethical reasoning skills were important. Additionally, on average, students also “Somewhat” or “Strongly” agreed that they had confidence in their abilities to apply ethical reasoning skills.

In general, students self-reported thinking about ethical issues, applying ethical reasoning to make a decision, thinking about ethics when grappling with complex situations, engaging in ethical reasoning to give advice to others, on either a weekly or daily basis. They report discussing real-life ethical dilemmas with others either monthly or weekly.

How and to what extent are students experiencing the 8 KQs? And is this exposure positively related to achievement of the MC Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)?

Approximately 11% of second-year students reported receiving “heavy” exposure to the 8 KQ framework in general education classes. Similarly, about 11% of students reported experiencing “heavy” exposure to the 8 KQs in Major courses. This is down somewhat from previous years (14% in general education courses, 15% in major classes in 2014-2015). Approximately 67% of students self-reported experiencing some or “minor” exposure to the 8 KQs through activities outside of the classroom (e.g., student organizations, service learning activities, etc.).

For the full technical report for 2015-2016, please email mc@jmu.edu.