

What are the Information Competencies? A Proposal for Hartnell College

“Information competency is the ability to find, use and communicate information in all its various formats. It combines aspects of library literacy, research methods, and technological literacy. Information competency includes consideration of the ethical and legal implications of information and requires the application of both critical thinking and communication skills.”

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

Information competency is also known as “information competence,” “information literacy,” and “media literacy” depending on the setting in which it is discussed.

The Proposal

Competencies in italics are the subset proposed for the certificate level student. We propose that Associate Degree and transfer level students master all of the competencies listed below.

The abbreviations in parentheses identify the type of skill.

R = Research, T = Technology, C = Critical Thinking, P = Presentation

(the following are adapted from the ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIANS guidelines for information competency)

Standard One: Define Information Need

The student will determine the nature and extent of information needed.

Defines and articulates a need for information (R, T)

Locate general information sources

Identify key concepts and terms describing the information need

Modify and form appropriate questions

Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential information sources. (R, T)

Knows how information is produced, organized and disseminated

Recognizes value of different formats

Identifies audience for information (i.e. popular vs. scholarly)

Differentiates between primary and secondary sources

Determines cost and benefit of getting information (C, R)

Determines availability and makes decisions whether to pursue resources

Plans timeline for getting information

Reevaluates nature and extent of information needs (C, R)

Uses appropriate criteria to review initial information

Clarifies, revises or redefines question or relationship of ideas

Standard Two: Access Information

The student will access information effectively and efficiently

Selects appropriate methods and retrieval systems for accessing information (C, R, T)

Selects effective and efficient approaches for accessing information in print and non-print databases

Investigates scope, content, and organization of information retrieval systems (e.g. book catalogs, periodical indexes, databases, search engines, etc.)

Selects appropriate tools

Identifies search language

Evaluates type of source material in each resource

Designs and implements effective search strategies (R, T)

Develop search plan

Identifies key words, related terms

Selects appropriate vocabulary for source

Implements search appropriate to source

Implements searches in varied retrieval systems

Develops research design using experimentation, observation, interview, surveys, or checklists to gather information

Retrieves information online (search mechanics) (T,R)

Uses locally available search systems

Uses other search systems

Uses search engines

Uses browser and email

Refines search strategy (C)

Assesses information for quantity, quality and relevance

Identify gaps

Repeats search strategies for more information if needed

Records and manages information and information sources (R, T)

Systematically organizes information

Records citation information

Demonstrates effective use of technology to organize and manage files

Differentiates between types of sources cited and information needed for citation

Records raw data from observations using anecdotal notes, running records, frequency tallies, video or audio recordings, or checklists

Standard Three: Evaluates information

The student will critically evaluate information and its sources

Discusses information gathered (P, C, T)

Participates in classroom and other discussions

Participates in electronic communication

Evaluates if information found is adequate for question (C, R, T)

Determines whether information is sufficient in quantity, quality, and type

Reviews search strategy and revises if needed

Reviews sources and revises if needed

Demonstrates understanding of main ideas from information gathered (C)

Reads text and identifies main ideas

Restates concepts in own words

Identifies quotable information

Evaluates information gathered (C)

Examines validity, accuracy, authority, bias, timeliness

Analyzes logic of arguments

Recognizes prejudice, deception and manipulation

Recognizes cultural context of information

Compares data to hypotheses formulated in scientific research

Assesses and evaluates observed data using appropriate tools

Compares new and prior knowledge and synthesizes to construct new concepts (C)

Determines if information is satisfactory for original research question

Questions validity and appropriateness of data

Evaluates if information sources are contradictory

Draws conclusions from information

Integrates new information

Selects retrieved information to support topic

Standard Four: Apply the Information

The student will apply the information to accomplish a task

Synthesizes information to complete project (C, R)

Organizes information, e.g. into outlines, drafts

Uses quotes and paraphrases to support argument

Summarizes main ideas and/or paraphrases main ideas

Organizes information gathered to plan and implement projects, e.g. lesson plans

Uses information to develop and use good strategies for project implementation

Communicates the project effectively (P, T)

Uses appropriate style and format for academic project

Uses appropriate media for project presentation (print, web, video, etc.)

Uses communication appropriate for diverse audiences (ADA considerations, multicultural consideration, etc)

Standard Five: Ethics

The student will understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and will access and use information ethically and legally.

Understands the ethical, legal, and sociopolitical issues concerning information and technology

Distinguishes between free and fee-based access to information

Comprehends intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of information

Understands the codes of ethics appropriate to the field of study

Recognizes the laws, regulations and institutional policies and etiquette related to access and use of information sources.

Uses approved passwords or I. D.'s ethically

Demonstrates understanding of plagiarism and properly attributes the work of others

Complies with institutional policies on access to information resources

Understands and practices code of ethics and laws regarding the use of personal information and privacy

Demonstrates confidentiality with sensitive information

Acknowledges use of information sources (R)

Recognizes that all sources require documentation

Uses appropriate documentation style for citing sources