What is the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)?

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- CLA stands for the Collegiate Learning Assessment. The CLA is a national effort to assess the quality of undergraduate education by directly measuring student-learning outcomes.
- The CLA focuses on a set of common areas that comprise what is central to most notions of collegiate education. These areas are: critical thinking, analytic reasoning, written communication, and problem solving.
- CLA is developed by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE). The University of Kentucky has participated in the four year CLA assessment project since fall 2007. This fall 2011 will be the second time UK will be part of the four year CLA assessment.
- Learn more about CLA

Why is CLA important?

- CLA is a national effort to assess the quality of undergraduate education by directly measuring student-learning outcomes.
- This four-year assessment project will help our university to understand better the skill development of undergraduate students.

What types of questions are asked on CLA?

The CLA combines three types of testing instruments:

- The “Make an Argument” Analytic Writing Task presents an opinion on an issue and asks students to address this issue from any perspective they wish, so long as they provide relevant reasons and examples to explain and support their views. Students have 45 minutes to complete this essay.
- The “Critique-an-Argument” Analytic Writing Task asks students to evaluate an argument by discussing how well reasoned they find it to be (rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing with the position presented). Students have 30 minutes to complete this essay.
- The “Performance Task” asks students to complete a “real-life” activity (such as preparing a memo or policy recommendation) by using a series of documents that must be reviewed and evaluated. Completion of these
instruments does not require the recall of particular facts or formulas; instead, the measures assess the demonstrated ability to interpret, analyze, and synthesize information. Students have 45 minutes to complete this task.

Are there any sample questions available?

Yes. The following are sample questions in the CLA:

1. Sample questions of “Make an Argument”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take and justification on an issue:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government funding would be better spent on preventing crime than in dealing with criminals after the fact.</td>
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</table>

2. Sample questions of “Critique-an-Argument”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluate an argument for how well reasoned it is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of marriages that end in separation or divorce is growing steadily. A disproportional number of them are from June weddings. Because June weddings are so culturally desirable, they are often preceded by long engagements as the couples wait until the summer months. The number of divorces increases with each passing year, and the latest statistics indicate that more than 1 out of 3 marriages will end in divorce. With the deck stacked against “forever more” it is best to take every step possible from joining the pool of divorcees. Therefore, it is sage advice to young couples to shorten their engagements and choose a month other than June for a wedding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3. Sample question of “Performance Task”

Complete a task using a set of provided materials:

You are the assistant to Pat Williams, the president of DynaTech, a company that makes precision electronic instruments and navigational equipment. Sally Evans, a member of DynaTech’s sales force, recommended that DynaTech buy a small private plane (a SwiftAir 235) that she and other members of the sales force could use to visit customers. Pat was about to approve the purchase when there was an accident involving a SwiftAir 235. You are provided with the following documentation:

1: Newspaper articles about the accident
2: Federal Accident Report on in-flight breakups in single engine planes
3: Pat's e-mail to you & Sally's e-mail to Pat
4: Charts on SwiftAir's performance characteristics
5: Amateur Pilot article comparing SwiftAir 235 to similar planes
6: Pictures and description of SwiftAir Models 180 and 235

Please prepare a memo that addresses several questions, including what data support or refute the claim that the type of wing on the SwiftAir 235 leads to more in-flight breakups, what other factors might have contributed to the accident and should be taken into account, and your overall recommendation about whether or not DynaTech should purchase the plane.

What does participation in CLA mean for students?

How am I selected?

You are one of the 300 students randomly selected from the first-time and full-time students who are enrolled in the fall of 2011 and who are at least 18 years old by August 30, 2011.

Do I have to take CLA?

No. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Do I have to answer all of the questions?

Yes.

You need to answer all the questions if you choose to participate and the proctor will make sure you have completed all the tasks (Make an Argument, Critique-an-Argument, and Performance Task).

Will taking CLA affect my GPA?

No.

Your participation will not in any way influence your academic standing at the University of Kentucky.

Will I get to see the results of the test?

Yes.

You will be able to find out how well you did on the tasks compared to other students at the University of Kentucky and across the country who have completed the same task. After all students’ responses have been scored and analyzed, you will receive an email that includes a URL where you can view the results.
How long does the CLA assessment take?

- You will be assessed in the fall of 2011 during your first year at UK, again at the end of your second year in the spring of 2013, and again as a senior at the end of four years in the spring of 2015.
- Each session is approximately 180 minutes. Over the next four years, the total time involvement is about 9 hours.

What are the rewards if I take the CLA?

- You will receive a total cash payment of $225.00 for completing all three assessments, that is, $75.00 per session following the completion of each on-campus assessment session.
- The top three scorers of the first two assessment years will be paid $250 each and three students with the most improved scores from their first year assessment will receive $250 each after the end of the spring 2015 assessment.

Who administers the CLA?

The CLA is administered by the Council for Aid to Education via the internet. Students will need to come to a proctored computer lab on campus to take the assessments.

Proctors will be hired to distribute and collect materials, and to ensure the integrity of the assessment.

May my friends take the assessment if he or she was not selected?

No. Only students who were randomly selected and who receive the invitation to participate may take the assessment. If your friend did not receive an email for the Office of Assessment, he or she may not take the assessment.

- Who is chosen to participate in the study?

  First-time, full-time, 18 years of age or older, first-year college students are invited to take part in the CLA.

What do I have to do once I am selected?

You need to respond to the invitation by completing the consent form and registration form.
What commitment do I need to make?

Your participation is voluntary. The CLA is a four-year study with three (3) assessment sessions. You will be assessed in fall 2011, spring 2013, and spring 2015.

Over the next four years, the total time involvement is about nine (9) hours.

What are the benefits/rewards for me to take the CLA?

- You will be provided with measures of your own progress in your undergraduate studies.
- You will immediately receive $75 in cash for completing each assessment. There are three assessments in the four-year period of the study. If you complete two assessments, you will receive $150. If you complete all three assessments, you will receive $225.
- In addition, if you are one of the three top scorers in the first two assessment years, you will receive $250. If you are one of three students with the most improved scores from the first-year assessment, you will be given $250 after the final assessment.

Will my name remain confidential?

Yes.

Any identifying information will be kept confidential.

How will I know where to go for the assessment and what my session time will be?

The Office of Assessment will contact you by email to confirm your participation and will provide you with the date, time, and room where you will take the CLA.

How can I get more information about the CLA?

You can visit the CLA website at http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org