

# Library Department Student Learning Outcomes Rubric for Information Literacy

Normandale Community College Library

Ver. 3.0 — Last revised: Spring 2025

## Introduction

Information literacy is an area of library faculty expertise by credential field (Information Studies). Through our work in the classroom, one-on-one with students in the Library, and through collaborations with our faculty and staff colleagues, we seek to strengthen the information literacy abilities of the Normandale community.

Our expertise in information literacy notwithstanding, we share the responsibility of educating students to become information literate lifelong learners with our faculty colleagues in all disciplines, and there are discipline-specific information literacy outcomes embedded in many courses. As a metaliteracy, information literacy overlaps with many other literacies such as media literacy, visual literacy, data literacy, digital literacy, etc.

Normandale Library faculty identified these information literacy outcomes and created the associated rubric to support our own assessment work. These outcomes are based on the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, which is the guiding document for instruction librarians in academic libraries. Organized into four outcome groups, these 20 learning outcomes do not represent the whole of information literacy. We have focused on the outcomes we commonly see in research assignments at Normandale or that we assess in our own classroom instruction. We are still discussing a few outcomes, such as those related to algorithmic literacy and generative artificial intelligence literacy, which may appear in a future version of this document.

Each outcome in this document maps directly to one of Normandale's Program Learning Outcomes for the Associates of Arts degree in Liberal Education – either Responsibility 3: Use Information Appropriately, or Skill 2: Critical Thinking. Responsibility 3: Use Information Appropriately states,

"Students will be able to formulate strategies to locate evaluate, and apply information in an ethical way." Skill 2: Critical Thinking states, "Students will be able to engage in the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion." Library faculty will create mapping documentation at a future date.

Information literacy as a whole cannot be achieved in a single class session. Students become proficient over time and reach mastery over the course of their academic careers. Some of the learning outcomes in this document can be assessed during a library class session. But performance on other outcomes can only be measured using students' formative assessments (e.g., annotated bibliographies) or summative assessments (e.g., argumentative research essays) in a course. Library faculty only have access to student assignments for assessment purposes through voluntary collaboration with course faculty.

This outcomes and rubric document may be a useful conversation starter with our fellow faculty collaborators when planning course-integrated library instruction. But nothing here is meant to hinder or stifle that collaboration or the identification of different information literacy learning outcomes to meet the needs of a specific assignment or discipline.

Library faculty support student learning in several ways. We instruct students in one-on-one research consultations with or without an appointment. We collaborate with our faculty colleagues to provide course-integrated, information literacy instruction to students in on-campus and online classrooms. We also provide information literacy assignment consultation services for course faculty at any stage of the assignment development process. Assignment consultations may be in preparation for a library instruction session or independent of library instruction entirely.

**Outcome Group 1: Students will be able to engage in a strategic process of inquiry.**

**Overview from the Framework:** Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional lines of inquiry. This process of inquiry extends beyond the academic world to the community at large, and the process of inquiry may focus upon personal, professional, or societal needs. The spectrum of inquiry ranges from asking simple questions that depend

upon basic recapitulation of knowledge to increasingly sophisticated abilities to refine research questions, use more advanced research methods, and explore more diverse disciplinary perspectives. Students acquire strategic perspectives on inquiry and a greater repertoire of investigative methods.

**Group 1 Outcomes:**

- 1a) Develops an identified topic into a manageable scope for the task or assignment
- 1b) During preliminary research, uses credible sources, including library sources, to increase familiarity with the topic
- 1c) Formulates specific research questions for investigation
- 1d) Identifies the types of information sources required to meet the information need
- 1e) Identifies key concepts and terms relevant to the topic and the research questions

Outcome Group 1	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>1a) Develops an identified topic into a manageable scope for the task or assignment</b> Frame: Research as Inquiry	Topic is clearly articulated, relevant to the assignment or task, and appropriately focused in scope.	Topic is clearly articulated and relevant to the assignment or task but is too broad or too narrow in scope.	Topic is vague or not feasible for assignment or task and scope is irrelevant to assignment or task and scope is unclear.
<b>1b) During preliminary research, uses credible sources, including library sources, to increase familiarity with the topic</b> Frames: Research as Inquiry, Searching as Strategic Exploration	Sources consulted are credible for the topic and designed to meet preliminary research needs (e.g., tertiary sources).	Engages in preliminary research but the credibility of sources varies or the sources consulted do not meet preliminary research needs (i.e., do not provide topic overviews or other background information).	Chooses low-credibility sources or assumes all sources vary only in terms of relevance not depth or purpose.
<b>1c) Formulates specific research questions for investigation</b> Frame: Research as Inquiry	Formulates at least one complex research question that is suitable for investigation at the college level and meets assignment requirements. Plans for research by breaking complex questions into researchable parts.	Formulates a research question that is not adequately complex for investigation at the college level or does not meet assignment requirements. Needs assistance to plan for research by breaking complex questions into researchable parts.	Does not formulate a research question from the topic or identify a compelling aspect of the topic to investigate.
<b>1d) Identifies the types of information sources required to meet the information need</b> Frame: Information Creation as a Process	Selects the appropriate source type for the information need by considering the discipline, level of evidence needed, and the creation processes of different information types.	Identifies source type differences but does not select the appropriate source type for the information need. The creation processes of some source types may be confused.	Does not select the appropriate source type for the information need and struggles to recognize source type differences including differences in creation processes.

Outcome Group 1	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>1e) Identifies key terms and related terms relevant to the topic and the research questions</b> Frame: Searching as Strategic Exploration	Identifies key terms and related terms that accurately represent the topic and research questions using vocabulary appropriate to the discipline and the desired source type(s). Includes key terms identified during preliminary research.	Identifies terms that do not adequately represent the topic and research questions (some key terms are missing or terms are overly broad). Most selected terms use informal language inappropriate to the discipline and the desired source type. Terms identified during preliminary research are irrelevant to the topic or questions.	Identifies terms that do not adequately represent the topic and research questions and terms do not use vocabulary appropriate to the discipline and the desired source type (most key terms are missing and terms are overly broad or informal). Does not include terms identified during preliminary research or terms are irrelevant to the topic or questions.

## Outcome Group 2: Students will be able to construct searches strategically and adapt to an evolving research process.

**Overview from the Framework:** Searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops. Encompassing inquiry, discovery, and serendipity, searching identifies both possible relevant sources as well as the means to access those sources. As students become experts, they realize that information searching is a context-

tualized, complex experience that affects, and is affected by, the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the searcher. As students develop, they move from searching a limited set of resources using few search strategies to searching more broadly and deeply deploying various search strategies depending on the sources, scope, and context of the information need.

### Group 2 Outcomes:

- 2a) Strategically chooses appropriate search tool(s) or database(s)
- 2b) Strategically and iteratively uses search techniques to construct queries and modify results
- 2c) Accesses possibly relevant sources

Outcome Group 2	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>2a) Strategically chooses appropriate search tool(s) or database(s)</b> Frame: Searching as Strategic Exploration	Matches information need, including desired information source type, to the appropriate search tool (e.g., Book Search, Combined Search, format-specific database, discipline-specific database, web search engine, etc.). When needed, explores additional search tools or databases to fully meet information need.	Searches only in the Library's Combined Search or a general database like Academic Search Complete without first considering the information need.	Uses a web search engine for all searching without first considering the information need.

Outcome Group 2	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>2b) Strategically and iteratively uses search techniques to construct queries and modify results</b> Frame: Searching as Strategic Exploration	Uses an iterative search process to change strategies and practices as needed based on search results. Uses multiple types of searching language (e.g., controlled vocabulary, keywords, etc.) appropriately. Appropriately uses multiple filters or limiters to discover relevant search results.	Uses a repetitive search process that changes little or changes are not based on search results. Uses limited types of searching language (i.e., keywords, natural language). May use one filter or limiter to refine search results.	Does not change search process based on search results. Uses natural language searching in library search tools and databases that do not support natural language. May give up on searching for sources before locating relevant results that meet assignment criteria.
<b>2c) Accesses possibly relevant sources</b> Frame: Searching as Strategic Exploration	Accesses the full source (e.g., complete article, book, contributed chapter, film, etc.) in person or online. May read the abstract or summary but does not confuse them with the full source. Knows about the Library's interlibrary loan (ILL) service and may use ILL to access sources from outside the Library's collections.	Accesses the full source (e.g., complete article, book, contributed chapter, film, etc.) in person or online. May read the abstract or summary but does not confuse them with the full source. May be unaware of the Library's interlibrary loan (ILL) service.	Mistakes an abstract or summary for the full source (e.g., complete article, book, contributed chapter, film, etc.) at least once during a search process. May be unaware of the Library's interlibrary loan (ILL) service.

### Outcome Group 3: Students will be able to evaluate information sources critically and contextually.

**Overview from the Framework:** Students critically evaluate information sources in the contexts of the information processes that created the source, the social and economic forces of the information environment, the constructed nature of authority, and their particular information need. Creation, editing, and dissemination processes vary, and the resulting source reflects those differences. Information sources reflect

their creators' expertise and credibility, and authority is both constructed and contextual. Authority is constructed in that various communities may recognize different types of authority and legitimate different information creation processes. Authority is contextual in that the information need helps to determine the level of authority required.

#### Group 3 Outcomes:

- 3a) Distinguishes between popular and scholarly sources
- 3b) Distinguishes between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources
- 3c) Determines the purpose and audience of a source
- 3d) Determines the authority of a source in the context of the discipline and the topic
- 3e) Determines the accuracy of a source by verifying claims and reading laterally
- 3f) Determines the currency of a source in the context of a particular information need

Outcome Group 3	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>3a) Distinguishes between popular and scholarly sources</b> Frame: Information Creation as a Process	Identifies the correct type of sources as required by the assignment.	Inconsistent in properly identifying several sources.	Does not distinguish between the types of sources or discusses a source as one type when it is actually another type.
<b>3b) Distinguishes between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources</b> Frame: Information Creation as a Process	Identifies the correct type of sources as required by the assignment.	Inconsistent in properly identifying several sources.	Does not distinguish between the types of sources or discusses a source as one type when it is actually another type.
<b>3c) Determines the purpose and audience of a source</b> Frame: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual	Correctly identifies the purpose and audience of the source.	Correctly identifies either the purpose or the audience of the source.	Misidentifies the purpose and audience of the source or does not identify the purpose and the audience.
<b>3d) Determines the authority of a source in the context of the discipline and the topic</b> Frame: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual	Accurately determines author credibility by examining how expertise affects their qualifications to write on the particular topic. Conducts background research into author(s) and their institutional affiliations or the publishing sponsor. Considers the expectations for authority in the discipline and the markers of authority (credentials, formal or lived experience, etc.).	Determines author credibility by examining expertise but does not sufficiently relate expertise to the particular topic. Conducts background research into author(s) and their institutional affiliations or the publishing sponsor. May not consider the expectations for authority in the discipline and the markers of authority (credentials, formal or lived experience, etc.).	Uses irrelevant or inaccurate information to determine author credibility or does not conduct background research to establish credibility.
<b>3e) Determines the accuracy of a source by verifying claims and reading laterally</b> Frame: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual	Determines accuracy by identifying the information the author uses and assessing its credibility.	Determines accuracy by identifying the information the author uses but insufficiently assesses its credibility.	Misidentifies the information the author uses or assesses its credibility using irrelevant criteria.
<b>3f) Determines the currency of a source in the context of a particular information need</b> Frame: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual	Determines the currency of a source by considering the publication date relative to the topic and the particular information need.	Determines the currency of a source by considering the publication date but does not sufficiently relate the currency to the topic or the particular information need (e.g., prioritizes only the most recent sources regardless of topic, information need, or source type).	Inaccurately identifies publication date or does not consider currency of source.

**Outcome Group 4: Students will be able to follow and participate in scholarship as conversation.**

**Overview from the Framework:** Communities of scholars, researchers, and professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations. Students understand that a given issue may be characterized by several competing perspectives as part of an ongoing conversation in which information users and creators come together and negotiate meaning. Students understand that, while some topics have established answers through this process, a query may not have a single

uncontested answer. Students therefore seek out many perspectives, not merely the ones with which they are familiar. Developing familiarity with the sources of evidence, methods, and modes of discourse in the field helps students enter the conversation. Providing attribution to previous research is an obligation of participation in the conversation. Attribution enables the conversation to move forward and strengthens one's voice in it.

**Group 4 Outcomes:**

- 4a) Uses attribution, citation, and reference to give credit when sharing the ideas of others
- 4b) Constructs references (e.g., Works Cited list) in a recognizable, consistent and discipline-appropriate style as required by the assignment
- 4c) Uses in-text citations in a consistent and discipline-appropriate style as required by the assignment
- 4d) Identifies the functions of a reference list in the scholarly conversation, and uses it in the research and source evaluation processes
- 4e) Follows scholarly discourse on a topic across multiple sources over time
- 4f) Engages with a diversity of opinions and perspectives on a topic

Outcome Group 4	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>4a) Uses attribution, citation, and references to give credit when sharing the ideas of others</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation, Information Has Value	Consistently attributes all or nearly all information or ideas that come from other sources (beyond general knowledge facts) as appropriate for the assignment (e.g., in each paragraph of the essay). No or almost no evidence of overcitation or undercitation.	Attribution choices show evidence of overcitation or moderate undercitation. Attributes at least half the information or ideas that come from other sources (beyond general knowledge facts) as appropriate for the assignment (e.g., in each paragraph of the essay). Key information is unattributed. It may be unclear which source provided which information.	Attribution choices show evidence of overcitation or significant undercitation. Attributes less than half the information or ideas that come from other sources (beyond general knowledge facts) as appropriate for the assignment (e.g., in each paragraph of the essay). Most information is unattributed. It may be unclear which source provided which information.
<b>4b) Constructs references (e.g., Works Cited list) in a recognizable, consistent and discipline-appropriate style as required by the assignment</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation	References are consistent and use a style allowed by the assignment. Metadata is complete or nearly complete and any missing metadata does not prevent the reader from locating the sources. Formatting or punctuation errors are minimal.	References are somewhat consistent, and it is clear the student is attempting to use a style allowed by the assignment. Some metadata elements may be missing, but the missing metadata does not prevent the reader from locating the cited sources. Formatting or punctuation errors are present but do not interfere with understanding.	Citations are inconsistent, and it may not be clear what style the student is using or the style is not allowed by the assignment. References include some key pieces of metadata for each source, but other important metadata is missing. Punctuation and formatting errors may be widespread.

Outcome Group 4	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
<b>4c) Uses in-text citations in a consistent and discipline-appropriate style as required by the assignment</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation	In-text citations are consistent and use a style allowed by the assignment. All sources cited in the text appear in the list of references and they are unambiguously identifiable using only the information in the in-text citation. Formatting or punctuation errors are minimal.	In-text citations are somewhat consistent, and it is clear the student is attempting to create in-text citations in a style allowed by the assignment. Metadata, formatting, or punctuation errors are present and may interfere with interpreting some in-text citations.	In-text citations are inconsistent, and it may not be clear what citation style the student is using or the style is not allowed by the assignment. Citations include some key pieces of metadata for each source, but other important metadata is missing. Punctuation and formatting errors may be widespread.
<b>4d) Identifies the functions of a reference list in the scholarly conversation, and uses it in the research and source evaluation processes</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation	Identifies the function of a reference list as crediting the work of others and preventing plagiarism, and uses the reference list to retrieve cited sources of interest. Considers the cited sources when conducting a source evaluation.	Identifies the function of a reference list as crediting the work of others and preventing plagiarism, and uses the reference list to retrieve cited sources of interest. May not consider the cited sources when conducting a source evaluation.	Identifies the function of a reference list as crediting the work of others and preventing plagiarism. Does not use the reference list to retrieve the cited sources. Does not consider the cited sources when conducting a source evaluation.
<b>4e) Follows scholarly discourse on a topic across multiple sources over time</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation	Uses sources to trace the development of an academic idea or research topic across time. Draws from examples in multiple publications (or other venues).	Uses sources to trace the development of an academic idea or research topic within the same publication and/or in a limited time scope (e.g., letters or articles in direct response, journal theme issues).	Does not use sources to trace the development of an academic idea or research topic across time either within the same publication or over multiple publications.
<b>4f) Engages with a diversity of opinions and perspectives on a topic</b> Frame: Scholarship as Conversation	Engages with the strongest points of at least one source that advances a contrasting, opposing or complicating perspective.	Uses at least one source to acknowledge a contrasting, opposing, or complicating perspective but treats it superficially (e.g., dismisses competing arguments quickly, does not describe the perspective in sufficient detail, etc.).	Does not show evidence of engaging with a source that advances a contrasting, opposing, or complicating perspective. Or, acknowledges a competing perspective but does not provide source attribution for that perspective.

## How this document was created

The Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education does not prescribe specific learning outcomes and recommends that each library adopts learning outcomes specific to their institutional context. This document is the result of many hours of research and discussion among Normandale librarians. In this process, we adapted portions of two documents with Creative Commons licenses that allow remixing into our own writing: the ACRL's [Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education](#)<sup>†</sup> and Greenfield Community College Nahman-Watson Library's [Information Literacy Rubric](#)<sup>‡</sup>. We also consulted the library learning outcomes, information literacy

rubrics, and related documents of the libraries of Minnesota State University – Mankato, Spokane Community College, Delaware County Community College, Prince George's Community College, Carleton College, University of Texas, as well as the American Association of Colleges and Universities' Information Literacy VALUE Rubric.

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