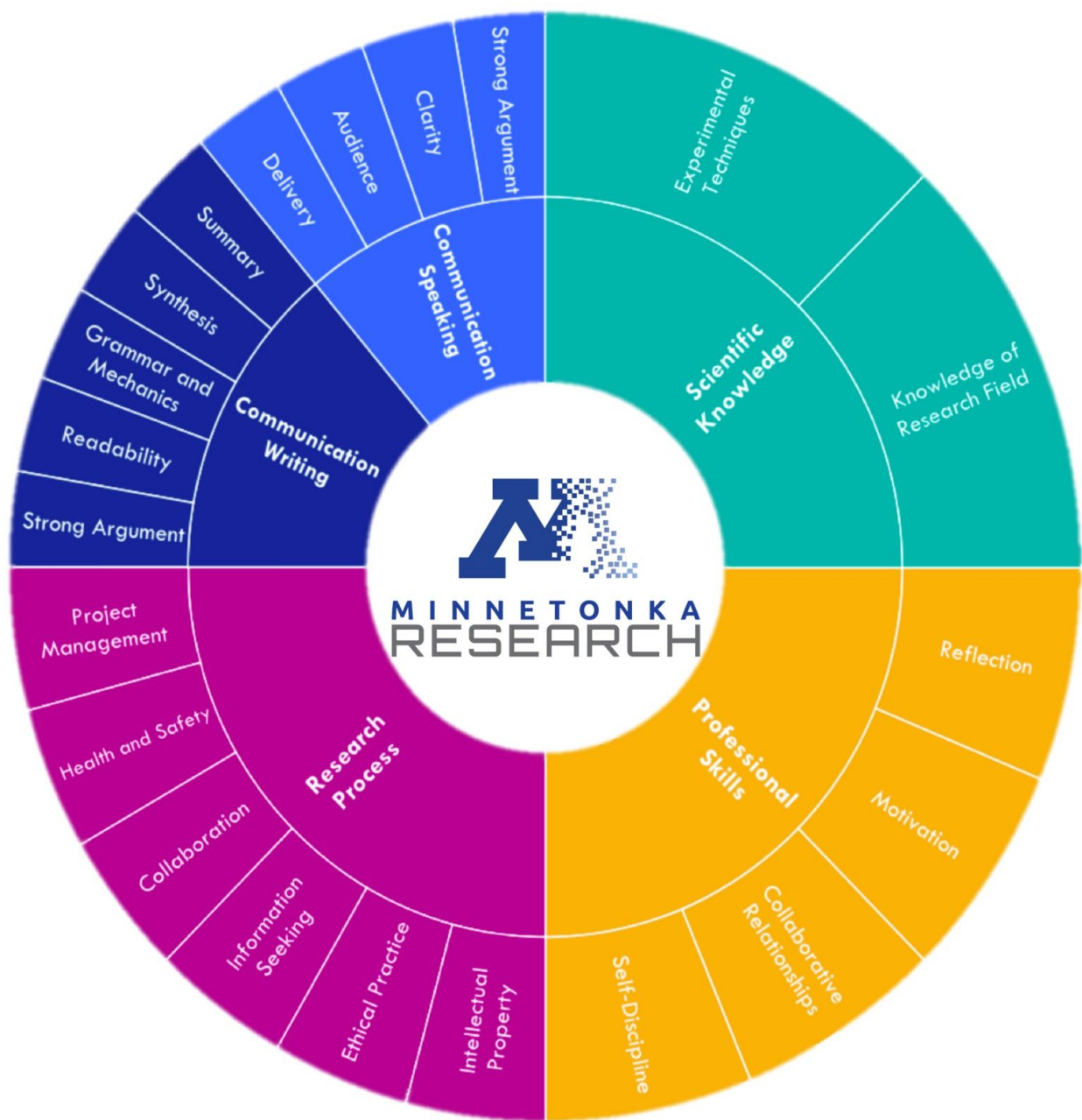


Competencies and Grading Information

Minnetonka Research students will be assessed throughout the duration of the course using our established list of core competencies. This list, developed with insight from global leaders in the research field, represents the skills and competencies needed to succeed as a 21st-century researcher.

Students will be assessed on each competency a number of times and in a variety of manners to establish growth and placement in the continuum of mastery for each. This continuum is represented by four potential placements, ranging from *initiating* (1) to *advancing* (4), in which students can move during the course depending on their current demonstration of mastery in each competency domain (*Communication, Professional Skills, Research Process, and Scientific Knowledge*).



FAQs

Why are you implementing a competency-based system?

In looking at a series of research organizations around the world, a clear set of competencies required for a 21st-century researcher emerged: Communication, Professional Skills, Research Process, and Scientific Knowledge. This system has been designed to help students *develop* the skills of research using the tasks, assignments, and experiences already in place within the Minnetonka Research Program.

In addition, one of the goals of the Minnetonka Research program is to report grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning and student growth. By employing a competency-based system, students will be encouraged to take meaningful steps to push their understanding of the four core competencies that will help them excel not only in Minnetonka Research but also in the scientific community. This pathway will allow students to experience clear expectations and feedback from instructors on how to advance their achievement within each of the 21 competencies.

What are the best outcomes of moving to a competency-based system?

Benefits of moving to a competency-based system include:

- More clarity for students, parents, and faculty -- everyone knows what the targets are
- Transparency on grading practices
- Ability to be fluid and responsive to individual student needs and situations
- Higher level of student work; with more clearly articulated learning outcomes, students are able to focus on learning rather than trying to accumulate points and feel as if they need to jump through hoops
- Provides students with a measurable evaluation of their current “real life” skills.

What will be the same?

Students will still receive a letter grade at the end of the semester as they do in all of their other courses. The research course is built around 3 phases: research development, research process and analysis, and communication. All students will continue to go through these three stages of research and experience the same types of assessments as in previous years. This will include things such as a written proposal, weekly status updates, elevator speeches, small group discussions, poster presentations, laboratory notebooks, and more.

How is competency-based grading different from the grading in my student's other courses?

In most traditional 100-point grading systems, a student's grades are typically based on all of the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the core competencies for the class.

Competency-based grading does distinguish between tests, homework, or projects. All of the work completed by a student is used to assess the student's progress in the core competencies. Student scores from completed work are tracked by the core competencies. This provides the teacher, student, and parent a detailed picture of which competencies a student has mastered and what students can continue to work on to achieve higher performance on the competencies they have not yet mastered.

How will my student be assessed?

Your student's learning will be assessed using a variety of assessments. These tools will include formal assessments such as the project proposal, written assignments, weekly status-updates, presentations, scientific notebook checks projects, and other verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a competency-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student's progress on the competencies.

How will a grade be determined?

The purpose of the grade is to communicate achievement of these competencies, at a point in time. This grade is a part of a larger reporting system that includes rubrics, feedback, and progress communicated over the course of time, to ensure students are clear about how to grow and achieve at higher levels of mastery on these 21 core competencies.

Each competency will be assessed using a 4 point rubric and will be assessed multiple times throughout the course. The competency scores will be based on the most recent and most frequent scores as a student progresses through the course. Schoology will show how often a competency has been assessed, and provide a summary score that reports the most recent and most frequent score. An important aspect of demonstrating competency is showing mastery consistently, not just one time, especially as some assignments will become more complex over time. If students are missing assignments and have not provided enough evidence to accurately assess a competency, missing evidence (assignments), must be submitted in order to report a score for that competency.

Current placement on the continuum for each competency will be updated regularly on Schoology and can be viewed by both parents and students. Student grades, as reported on Skyward, will be converted back to the traditional letter grade system by placing equal weighting (25% each) to the four main domains (*Communication, Professional Skills, Research Process, and Scientific Knowledge*).

What can my student do to improve their grade? How can I help my student if they seem to be struggling?

The goal of a competency-based class is on ensuring that students master the essential competencies for the class, so any efforts to raise your student's grade will have the same goal. Throughout the course, students will receive feedback via the rubrics and specific feedback from the instructor. To improve their grade, students should check Schoology to see which competencies need the most improvement, look at the rubrics and feedback provided on those competencies, and find ways to move up a level on the provided rubric. Instructors are available to students to help support their growth in each of the competencies and will work with students who are seeking to grow to accomplish their goals.