

UW Colleges Assessment Planning and Reporting Form

Email your reports to SAC@uwc.edu

2003 - 2004

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| Department | English |
| Assessment Coordinator(s) | Nancy Chick and Holly Hassel |

NOTE: Please attach relevant supporting information used to complete the Report Summary Sheet.

PART 1: Assessment of General Education Outcomes

Section 1: Identify the Proficiencies/Performance Indicators Assessed

- at the *Planning* stage, mark the performance indicators to be assessed in the left hand column below
- at the *Reporting* stage, report the numbers of students who did not meet, met, or exceeded expectations

| Proficiency | Performance Indicators | # Do Not Meet | # Meet | # Exceed |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------|--------|----------|
| A. Analytical Skills X | 1. Analyze, synthesize, evaluate and interpret information and ideas | 363 | 1199 | 846 |
| | 2. Construct and support hypotheses and arguments | | | |
| | 3. Select and apply scientific and other appropriate methodologies | | | |
| | 4. Integrate knowledge and experience to arrive at creative solutions | | | |
| | 5. Recognize fallacies and inconsistencies | | | |
| | 6. Gather and assess information from printed sources, electronic sources, and observation | | | |

Section 3: Use of Results

1. How did individual instructors report that they plan to use these results to improve the instructional process?

We have been proceeding as a department in addressing the results of the assessment, so individual instructors were less likely to report plans for improving the instructional process based on the results as they were to look to the DAC's for guidance as to department-wide plans for improving the instructional process (see question 3).

2. What recommendations would you and/or the department assessment committee make to your department for continued improvement of the assessment process, proficiencies, performance indicators, assessment activity, rubric, and/or student performance in the discipline?

The one area that we would like to improve is the participation level of our department members, especially instructional academic staff. We would also like to have a more readily referenced guide for who is required to assess and what courses they should assess.

3. After discussion of the results by the department, what course of action will the department take to improve student performance with respect to the assessed proficiency?

Our department spent a lot of time working on the departmental assessment instrument and worked primarily on developing materials that would produce useable results, so our responses to assessment have worked with the department-specific data. Our June 2003 workshop and extensive work on the English 098, 101, and 102 rubric has been the centerpiece of our ongoing assessment work and the focus at our department meetings and conversations.

4. Have you assessed this proficiency/performance indicator previously? Did you make changes to your teaching and/or the assessment tool based on that assessment? Describe the impact those changes had on student learning.

Yes, the previous Department Assessment Coordinator assessed this proficiency for English 101 and English 278, two of the number of courses we looked at for the Analyze, Synthesize, Interpret, and Evaluate (ASIE) proficiency this past year. However, the scope of the assessment was so small as to be of negligible importance. During the 1999-2001 assessment cycle, 3 campuses and 109 students were assessed for English 278, and 5 campuses and 110 students participated in the English 101 assessments. Since the proficiencies and performance indicators have changed since then, and that was two DAC's ago, it's hard to draw any conclusions or carry over from that year's assessment.

What seems obvious is that continuity and consistency in DAC's and proficiencies is essential for producing useful results. We hope that our work in the last year and this coming year (the 2003-2005 assessment cycle) will create a strong foundation for establishing that continuity over the next several cycles so we can produce meaningful results for our department's teaching.

PART 2: Assessment of Discipline-Specific Outcomes

Section 1: Identify discipline-specific outcomes/performance indicators.

| Outcomes/Performance Indicators |
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| 1. After taking a composition course in the English Department, any student should be able to address effectively the purpose and audience expectations for any written assignment and write clearly, fluently, and in a well-organized manner. |
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Section 2: Attach the rubric/standards used to assess each outcome/performance indicator.

Section 3: Assessment Results

| Performance Indicators for Outcome | # Do Not Meet | # Meet | # Exceed |
|------------------------------------|---------------|--------|----------|
| 1. Content | 173 | 618 | 733 |
| 2. Organization | 131 | 657 | 780 |
| 3. Diction | 122 | 531 | 414 |
| 4. Mechanics | 131 | 571 | 361 |
| 5. Sentence Fluency | 125 | 504 | 371 |

Section 5: Use of results

5. How did individual instructors report that they plan to use these results to improve the instructional process?

Our rubric did not invite individual instructors' feedback on how they plan to use it, but we did collect reports after our spring meeting from individual instructors on how they planned to address the results of our Fall 2003 results which suggested that students were not performing as well as they could be on using and integrating source material into their writing. See attached document ("Closing the Loop") for individual instructors' planned strategies for improving this area of instruction.

6. What recommendations would you and/or the department assessment committee make to your department for continued improvement of the assessment process, proficiencies, performance indicators, assessment activity, rubric, and/or student performance in the discipline?

The one area that we would like to improve is the participation level of our department members, especially instructional academic staff. We would also like to have a more readily referenced guide for who is required to assess and what classes they should assess.

7. After discussion of the results by the department, what course of action will the department take to improve student performance with respect to the assessed proficiency?

After our fall results, we included in our Spring 2004 Department Meeting (a two-day meeting) a presentation by two department members, John Allen and Greg Ahrenhoerster (both at UW-Waukesha) on strategies for teaching documentation in English 101 and English 102. Department members then identified one method they would incorporate in their courses to teach documentation more effectively, since we identified "citing and integrating sources" as the area we would focus on as a result of our assessment results in Fall 2003. See attached document ("Closing the Loop") for more.

Our spring assessment focused on sentence-level issues in our composition courses, and based on our results, we will be devoting one-and-a-half to two hours at our Fall, 2004 meeting a workshop of best-practices in teaching Standard Written English

(grammar, mechanics, sentence boundaries, etc.) in our composition courses. Ellyn Lem and Cassie Phillips (both at UW-Waukesha) will facilitate the fall workshop. The course guidelines for composition, sequentially require “practicing the conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics” in 098, “instruct[ion] about mechanical and grammatical conventions” in 101, and then “reinforce[ment of] the principles of grammar” in 102. We plan to discuss and exchange pedagogical strategies for achieving these goals.

8. Have you assessed this proficiency/performance indicator previously? Did you make changes to your teaching and/or the assessment tool based on that assessment? Describe the impact those changes had on student learning.

No, this was our first effort at assessing this proficiency for composition courses as it was one we created specifically for this assessment cycle. We anticipate that it will produce meaningful results that can be addressed and then re-addressed and assessed in the Fall 2005-2006 academic year.

PART 3: Additional Assessment and Contributions

Please ask for and include in the report information from Department members about any other assessment activities they have conducted, particularly in conjunction with grant-funded innovations. Also ask for and describe briefly any additional contributions to assessment such as publications, presentations, qualitative classroom innovations (such as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities), and other items relating to assessment that the department wishes to note.

- Nancy Chick consulted on the Colleges-wide SoTL grant that will bring together individual departments to develop SoTL projects, many of which will undoubtedly focus on assessment results and projects. She appointed Holly Hassel and Greg Ahrenhoerster as the "SoTL Point Persons" for the English Department. See below for their plans.
- Nancy Chick co-wrote two SoTL grant applications that involved assessment—one for the English Department (with Holly Hassel) and one for UW-Barron County (with Tracy White). The first, which more explicitly focused on assessment, was funded. She was also named OPID Representative for the UW Colleges for 2004-2005, as well as appointed to the OPID Executive Committee.
- Holly Hassel and Greg Ahrenhoerster are planning a SOTL workshop for English Department (funded by the OPID SoTL grant) that will likely turn some of our assessment findings into SoTL projects.
- Holly Hassel’s SOTL project for the Teaching Fellows Program is attempting to answer this question: “How does a course in American literature help students develop empathy, learn a tolerance for ambiguity, and identify and discuss moral questions?” Her year-long project will compile a bibliography of resources on teaching American literature, a theoretical essay synthesizing the results of her survey of scholarship on teaching American literature, a report of the results of her classroom research in the Spring 2005 course English 370 (a special themes course she will be teaching as American Short Story), and a website compiling these documents. This project also dovetails with our assessment effort as she will be drawing upon the results of our literature workshop in Summer of 2004, documents from our department members’ literature courses, and the department literature assessment rubric expected to be produced by the workshop and

documents. She anticipates the project will produce new knowledge about teaching literature that helps the department think more about their goals in literature courses, as well as new knowledge for the discipline about what she calls the "conscience and values" dimensions of teaching literature.

- Greg Ahrenhoerster's project began with the question of how students write papers in "non-English" classes. He was curious about whether they carried over the skills we teach in composition courses to their other courses. He collected over 100 papers from various history and communications classes, and (with Cassie Phillips' help) assessed them, looking for the proficiencies we try to teach in 098/101/102. He also surveyed the students about their approach to the assignment. After finding out which composition courses the students had completed, he has begun to consider how this could be used as an assessment tool. He has learned a number of things, including that English 102 seems to do a pretty good job of improving students' ability to organize and develop arguments and incorporate and document sources, but does not seem to improve grammar, punctuation, or sentence construction.
- Jane Oitzinger is involved in an ongoing SoTL assessment project that began with a UTIC (now OPID) grant for fall 2000 and recently resulted in a Marinette-Fox one-day (06/04/04) conference funded in large part by OPID. The conference was called "Understanding and Measuring Intellectual Development." At this point, she reports she has given; had scored in Olympia, WA; and analyzed about 150 sets (pre- and post-) of essay tests. The results, so far, have shown that students who completed team-taught interdisciplinary courses (6-credit hours or more) had gains in intellectual development (using the William Perry scheme) three times greater than in a lecture-based course; however, students in a stand-alone philosophy course that focused on discussion and lots of writing had gains similar to the IS learning communities. Right now, 80 other sets of essays are being scored in Olympia (a stand-alone IS, two 102s, and another 6-credit LC), and this fall she'll be testing about 80 more students in three or four courses with local funding (including \$1000 from local businesses) and other monies her group has scraped up. Also, the UWC Provost's office kicked in \$1000 to help with the conference and testing costs. To continue beyond this coming year- which she really needs to do in order to get a large variety of pedagogies and disciplines – she reports that she'll need to grub for more funds.
- Heidi Rosenberg may deliver a paper on "Understanding How Student Interpret Written Comments" at CCCC's conference. Her description is below.

A great deal has been written on improving the effectiveness of instructors' written comments on student papers over the years (see Anson, Connors and Lunsford, Elbow, Faigley, Fife and O'Neill, Huot, Odell, Phelps, Sommers, and more recently Russell S. Sprinkle), however, little has been written regarding students' responses to their instructors' written comments (see Anthony Edington). Assessment of student writing, however, is complicated by the fact that in recent years outside accrediting bodies have imposed frameworks of assessment on many colleges and universities. Instructional and assessment agendas create an imperative for composition instructors to conduct scholarly research into how students interpret and make use of instructors' written comments. While most composition instructors now shy away from commenting primarily on student error, we continue to seek the most effective way to comment on drafts in order to help students become better, more reflective writers. In conjunction with our efforts to help students consider their audience when they write, we must also remind ourselves of the very rhetorical act of commenting on student drafts. That is: How well do we keep in mind our students as audiences when we comment on their papers?

In this paper, I will consider how students read and understand instructors' comments in using departmental and institutionally created rubrics. Using ethnographic methodologies where data is gathered from student surveys, as well as in-depth interviews where I explore how students make meaning of or misinterpret their instructors' comments. If the aim in assessment is to help students become better more reflexive writers, as well as help them understand their own writing processes, my research aim is to help composition instructors better construct their audience of student readers when commenting on drafts, with the ultimate aim of facilitating student growth and self assessment.