

Assessment of Student Learning

English Department

3rd Assessment Cycle 2012-2015

Assessment Plan

General Education Competency
College Communication &
Critical Thinking

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Background

EN 101 will be assessed for General Education Goal #1 and #2. Goal #1 states “Students will demonstrate college-level communication skills,” and Gen Ed Goal #2 states “Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.” Three years ago the English department evaluated student performance in this area. Data from the assessment revealed that of the three areas of content, organization, and mechanics, content was consistently the weakest area of student writing. Further assessment revealed that the problem was not gathering research but instead understanding it.

The EN 101 study was followed by an assessment of critical reading in EN 52. That assessment showed that many students who complete EN 52 still have weaknesses in critical reading skills.

Both studies suggest that students could benefit from the addition of critical reading instruction as part of EN 101. Thus, the purpose of the proposed outcomes assessment project is twofold:

1. To identify patterns of EN 101 students’ weaknesses in critical reading comprehension.
2. To develop a comprehensive strategy to address those weaknesses.

Methodology

Composition and reading faculty will create a survey, an assignment, and a rubric to assess student reading. The results of this data will be used to identify patterns that need to be addressed. The faculty will develop strategies including but not limited to reading instruction and assignments to address reading issues. These strategies will be based on the input of all English faculty as well as current composition and reading research.

The proposed changes will be evaluated by piloting EN-101 sections and comparing the results to a control group. English faculty will use this data to determine the effectiveness of the new teaching strategies and make changes accordingly before rolling this out to all EN-101 sections.

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The composition and reading faculty have developed a survey, assignment, and rubric in an effort to assess student reading. The survey consists of 30 questions that are designed to help students identify their reading habits. Originally, students were required to use Scantron sheets to complete the survey, but it was quickly converted to an electronic format in an effort to improve data collection efficiency. Two instructors completed the survey using the Scantron option before the conversion; however their data was eventually included with the other instructors.

Our assessment committee created a standardized assignment that will be used by all instructors in the pilot after the major research paper has been submitted. We also identified a scholarly article from Academic Search Premier that is comprehensible without the need for extensive background research. All students will be given the article one class meeting prior to the date of the assignment so they can read over the article beforehand and primarily concentrate on providing an analytical response to the assignment prompt. Finally, students will submit their completed work electronically in an effort to expedite distribution to our assessment team, which includes the committee and adjuncts who will assist in reading and data assessment.

Finally, we have created a rubric that assesses content, organization, and style/mechanics. We will have a grade norming session in an effort to provide consistency for evaluative purposes.

Analysis of Data

In an effort to evaluate critical thinking and written communication, we created a rubric that measured three major competencies for evaluation: content, organization, and style/mechanics. We quantified the rubric by incorporating a scale of 1 to 5 that measured each major area. A score of 1 indicates that the assignment failed to meet expectations; a score of 3 correlates with the “C” standard established by University System of Maryland; and a score of 5 exceeded expectations.

Pilot Data

A total of 163 students were assessed, and the data collected for the assessment was merged with the final course grades for Spring 2013. However, four students did not have any grade data and accounts for any discrepancies in the total number of data reported. The following data represents the average scores of our evaluation using the 1 to 5 scale:

- Average Overall Score..... 2.77
- Content..... 2.72
- Organization..... 2.79
- Style/Mechanics..... 2.80

Since a score of 3 on our rubric correlates with the “C” standard established by the University System of Maryland, students who scored a 3 or higher have been calculated. The following represents the percentage of students who scored a 3 or higher in each competency:

- Content..... 55%
- Organization..... 62%
- Style/Mechanics..... 61%

Correlation to Final Course Grades

In an effort to assess how well students’ critical thinking and written communication skills correlate with the final grade earned in EN 101, we merged our pilot data with the data pulled from PeopleSoft. The following is what we found:

- Students scoring a 3 or higher in all competencies..... 38%
- Students in the pilot who received A’s and B’s in EN 101..... 55%

Students who scored a “4” in all competency areas were more likely to receive an “A” in EN 101.

Conclusion

Our data seems to indicate that students in our pilot from Spring 2013 struggled the most with content. However, more data is necessary to verify any potential trends.

<u>Assessment Timeline</u>	
<u>Semester</u>	<u>Assessment Objectives</u>
Fall 2012	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and present a plan to OAC. 2. Deploy initial <u>Pilot Assessment</u>. 3. Design, Research and Implement an effective assessment tool. 4. <u>Collect data</u>.
Spring 2013 (PRR Status Report is due April 1, 2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deploy <u>Pilot Assessment</u> if not completed in the fall. 2. <u>Analyze</u> initial Pilot Data. 3. Implement instructional and organizational strategies to improve the assessment project. 4. <u>Reassess</u> students and <u>collect data</u>.
Fall 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Analyze</u> Pilot Data. 2. Develop strategies based on that data to help improve student learning. 3. <u>Begin 1st Assessment</u>. 4. <u>Collect data</u>.
Spring 2014	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Analyze</u> Assessment Data. 2. Develop strategies based on that data to help improve student learning. 3. <u>Reassess students</u>. 4. <u>Collect data</u>. 5. Present a <u>progress report</u> to the OAC.
Fall 2014 (Self-Study Begins)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Analyze</u> Assessment Data. 2. Develop final strategies based on lessons learned over the course of the assessment. 3. <u>Conduct Final Assessment</u>. 4. <u>Collect Data</u>.
Spring 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Analyze</u> Data Collected over the course of the entire assessment. 2. <u>Prepare Final Assessment Report</u>.