

Humanities Department

Assessment Report Fall 2009

Assessment Report for Developmental Writing 101

Department Goals and Tasks

The Developmental Writing Assessment Report focuses on the following Humanities Department Goals:

Short Term:

Goal 4: Explore the appropriateness of COMPASS score cut-offs for placement in developmental courses.

Long Term:

Goal 1: Continue to develop and support Writing-Across-the-Curriculum, including our "Writing at Western" website, WNMU's Academic Research Conference, sections of writing intensive courses, and our on site and online writing centers.

Goal 4: Refine student outcomes assessment initiatives.

Program Philosophy

The need for remediation in student writing is self-evident. Today we live in a semi-literate and in some respects an anti-literate culture. The ability to read and assimilate material, the ability to think and reason clearly, and the ability to express oneself clearly both in speaking and in writing, are among the essential hallmarks of an educated person. Thus the work we do and the courses we teach in Developmental Studies Reading and Writing serve a number of vital needs: the need of individual students (regardless of their majors) to be able to use words competently in a variety of rhetorical situations; the need of the university to produce literate, articulate graduates who will speak well for the quality of the education they received at WNMU; the need of society at large for more literate, more articulate men and women who are fully prepared to carry out their responsibilities both as professionals in their individual fields of endeavor and as citizens of the state of New Mexico.

Course Instructional Objectives

1. Improve students' ability to write paragraphs which follow guidelines related to topic sentences and specific support.
2. Introduce requirements for essays
3. Increase awareness of connections between formal writing and speaking.
4. Develop ability to identify and correct grammatical errors

Outcomes or Competencies for Developmental Writing 101

1. Demonstrate knowledge of conventions of formal, written paragraphs in terms of topic sentences, unity, and coherence.
2. Proofread to produce final revisions of paragraphs free of most typos, missing words and grammatical errors such as fragments, run-ons, etc.
3. Demonstrate connections between formal writing and speaking through short class presentation.

Measurement Targets

The project was designed to study the effectiveness of Developmental Writing 101 in developing the writing skills students will need to be successful in Composition and Rhetoric 101 and other courses that require writing at the college level. Specifically, we were interested in discovering to what extent our students improved from the beginning to the end of the semester, and how their success correlated with Compass scores. It was also intended to provide preliminary conclusions about how our program might be improved.

Measurement Procedure

The Humanities Department conducted a pre/post study of Developmental Writing I in the spring of 2009. Twenty-one students in the three sections of DVSW 1 were given an in-class writing assignment at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The resulting essays were scored by two teams of readers. Each team scored both pre and post tests; readers scored either the pre or the post writings of individual students, but not both. They used the following rubric for scoring:

___ 4: Very good

___ 3: Good

___ 2: Adequate

___ 1: Poor

___ 0: Significantly inadequate

Statement of Results

Although there was acceptable inter-rater reliability, the results of the study suggested that there was a problem with the calibration in scoring:

Section A: All post-tests scored higher (labeled “gain”).

Section B: Two students scored higher on the post-test. One student scored lower on the post-test (labeled loss).

Section C: Six students scored lower on the post-test. Three students scored the same on both tests.

While it is possible that all students in Section A showed improvement on the post-test and no students in Section C showed improvement on the post-test, it is more likely that there was a problem with the scoring. Although there was a norming session in which readers calibrated scoring, it appears that one team used more rigorous standards; thus, one team was easier on the post-tests, and the other team was harder on the post-tests.

To test this hypothesis about the differing scoring standards of the two teams, two readers rescored the essays (without calibration due to a lack of time). In this second scoring, readers read paired essays, without knowing which essay was the pre-test and which was the post-test. They scored the essays using one of three categories: stronger, weaker, and equal.

Rescoring as Stronger/Weaker/Equal						
	First Scorer			Second Scorer		
Section A	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Results	
A1	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Gain	
A2	Weaker	Stronger	Equal	Equal	Split	
A3	Equal	Equal	Equal	Equal	Same	
A4	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Gain	
A5	Equal	Equal	Weaker	Stronger	Same	
A6	Equal	Equal	Equal	Equal	Same	
A7	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Gain	
A8	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Gain	

B1	Weaker	Stronger		Weaker	Stronger		Gain
B2	Stronger	Weaker		Weaker	Stronger		Split
B3	Equal	Equal		Equal	Equal		Same
B4	Weaker	Stronger		Weaker	Stronger		Gain
C1	Weaker	Stronger		Weaker	Stronger		Gain
C2	Equal	Equal		Equal	Equal		Same
C3	Weaker	Stronger		Weaker	Stronger		Gain
C4	Stronger	Weaker		Stronger	Weaker		Loss
C5	Weaker	Stronger		Weaker	Stronger		Gain
C6	Stronger	Weaker		Stronger	Weaker		Loss
C7	Equal	Equal		Equal	Equal		Same
C8	Weaker	Stronger		Stronger	Weaker		Split
C9	Equal	Equal		Weaker	Stronger		Split

The rescoring offered more predictable results:

Section A: Four students showed improvement, and three students showed no gain. Readers were split on the results of one student.

Section B: Two students showed improvement, and one student's essays were evaluated as having the same quality. Readers were split on the results of one student.

Section C: Three students showed improvement. Readers were split on the results of two students. One student's essays were rated as having equal quality. Two students scored lower on the post-test.

Normally, in the event of a discrepancy between two readers' scores (split), the essay would go to a third reader. However, given the informal nature of this second scoring, there were no third readings.

Discussion of Results and Action Plan

The suspicious results of the first scoring call into question both the effectiveness of our calibration and the design of the scoring. Given we were looking for improvement, we took the wrong approach in scoring pre and post essays as isolated entities. The informal second-scoring results support this conclusion. Comparing the quality of paired essays allowed readers to reach more predictable conclusions. As a result, we decided to consider the study done in spring 2009 as a pilot, and to repeat the study this fall using better scoring techniques. Next spring, we will score the fall 2009 pre and post essays as pairs; our goal will be to assess improvement from the beginning to the end of the semester. We will refine our calibration methods to avoid the problems of this study. We will also compare the

results to Compass scores to find out how well they predicted student success in Developmental Writing 101.

Communications

Department Goals and Tasks

The Communication Report focuses on the following Humanities Department Goals:

Long Range:

1. Continue to develop and support Writing-Across-th- Curriculum, including our “Writing at Western” website, WNMU’s Academic Research Conference, sections of writing intensive courses, and our on site and online writing centers.
2. Refine student outcomes assessment initiatives.

STATE-MANDATED COMPETENCIES (Learning Outcomes)

1. Analyze and evaluate oral and written communication in terms of situation, audience, purpose, aesthetics, and diverse points of view.
2. Express a primary purpose in a compelling statement and order supporting points logically and convincingly.
3. Use effective rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.
4. Employ writing and/or speaking processes such as planning, collaborating, revising, and editing to create presentations using correct diction, syntax, grammar, and mechanics.
5. Integrate research correctly and ethically from credible sources to support the primary purpose of a communication.
6. Engage in reasoned civic discourse while recognizing the distinctions among opinions, facts, and inferences.

INSTRUCTOR’S ADDITIONAL STUDENT OUTCOMES/COMPETENCIES

1. Students will learn the conventions of outlining,
2. understand the relationship between main and subordinate ideas,
3. recognize the differences between oral and written communication,
4. learn effective techniques for speech planning, rehearsing and presenting,
5. reduce the natural communication apprehension of speaking in public,
6. increase control of outward manifestations of communication apprehension,
7. and apply critical thinking in the planning, presentation, and evaluation of speeches.

INSTRUCTOR’S COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Improve students’ ability to speak effectively, and with ease and confidence in a variety of public speaking situations.
2. Increase students’ capacity to listen critically and purposefully to a variety of publicly delivered messages.
3. Develop in students a useful appreciation of the communication factors involved in the speaker-listener interaction of public speaking situations.

Measurement Targets

This project assessed students' abilities to distinguish between opinions, facts, and inferences

Measurement Procedures

The following was asked of all students on the first and close to last days of class:

In the next five minutes, distinguish among opinions, facts, and inferences by providing a definition of each. Do this on a clean sheet of paper and identify yourself, not by your name, but by your student number in the upper right corner.

Initial grading rubric:

As a pilot study, one faculty member blind scored definitions provided by students on the first and close to last days of class utilizing the following 0-3 scale according to how close the students' definitions came to those of the dictionary:

- 0 = no definitions essentially correct
- 1 = one definition essentially correct
- 2 = two definitions essentially correct
- 3 = all three definitions essentially correct

Results

Across the 23 students in **Summer 2008**, students improved their respective scores at the end of term compared to the beginning of the term by an average of 1.2 points. This clearly shows improvement across the term, but does not indicate where the improvement lies. It was the coder's impression that most of the improvement was due to better definitions of the term inference, an impression that couldn't be tested with this coding scheme.

For **Spring 2009**, we planned to use the following blind coding scheme with two faculty members as coders, which will allow for results that will indicate which of the three requires classroom attention.

Revised grading rubric:

- 1 = definition of opinion essentially correct

2 = definition of fact essentially correct

3 = definition of inference essentially correct

Discussion of Results and Action Plan

During **Summer 2009**, the lead faculty member decided to abandon this trivial approach to fulfilling the state's ill – defined assessment requirements and go back to the more useful and straight forward pre- and post-test of students own impressions of whether or not they have improved in a number of areas specified as student outcomes on the syllabus. The initial pilot version is on the following page and will be employed Spring 2010.

PUBLIC SPEAKING SURVEY

This survey is being conducted as part of WNMU's assessment program. So that you can remain completely anonymous, please don't put your name anywhere on this paper. Thank you for your help in thoughtfully completing this survey.

Please circle the appropriate answer for the following background information.

What is your class standing?

- a. first year undergraduate (freshman)
- b. second year undergraduate (sophomore)
- c. third year undergraduate (junior)
- d. fourth year undergraduate (senior)
- e. I am a graduate student
- f. I am a high school student taking this university class

Which one of the following statements best describes your situation?

- a. I just started the Public Speaking course.
- b. I am just about finished with the course.

Please indicate agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number according to the following scheme:

- 1 = strongly agree***
- 2 = agree somewhat***
- 3 = neutral***
- 4 = disagree somewhat***
- 5 = strongly disagree***

I'm scared to speak in public.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to plan, rehearse, and present a speech in public.	1	2	3	4	5
Public speaking skills will help me succeed in other courses.	1	2	3	4	5
Public speaking skills will help me advance professionally.	1	2	3	4	5
My critical listening skills are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5
My critical thinking skills are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5
I can make a public speech with confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to construct an outline.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU!

Communications also completed the New Mexico State Core Competencies Assessment, which provides assessment feedback of another sort:

Core Competencies Assessment 2008-2009: Area I Courses				
New Mexico Institution Name: WNMU			Communications	
Competencies				
<u>State Competencies</u>	<u>Assessment Procedures</u>	<u>Assessment Results</u>	<u>How Results Will Be Used To Make Improvements</u>	<u>(Optional)</u> Recommendations/Goals/ Priorities
(Learning Outcomes Being Measured)	Public Speaking, COMM 110 NMCCN COMM 1113 (Process/Instrument named or described – rubric attached)			
1. Students will analyze and evaluate oral and written communication in terms of situation, audience, purpose, aesthetics, and diverse points of view. Students should: Understand, appreciate, and	Each student evaluates own speeches and the speeches of three classmates using criteria on the attached evaluation form, which instructor discusses ahead of time, and gives students an opportunity to practice in ungraded situation. Student evaluation forms are graded	It typically takes students some experience giving, receiving, and hearing others give evaluations for them to develop the specificity to be truly helpful to their fellow students. This is evidenced by	If the scores on students' three formal sets of fellow student evaluations are not increasing, and it is the instructor's judgment that the students were putting forward the necessary effort, then the instructor must reassess the	

critically evaluate a variety of written and spoken messages in order to make informed decisions.	according to completeness, specificity, and detail. (Evaluation form and grading rubric are attached.)	increasing scores on their three formal sets of fellow student evaluations.	effectiveness of this area of instruction.	
<p>2. Students will express a primary purpose in a compelling statement and order supporting points logically and convincingly.</p> <p>Students should:</p> <p>Organize their thinking to express their viewpoints clearly, concisely, and effectively.</p>	<p>Outlines are required for each of three graded speeches. Minimal formatting criteria are embedded in the syllabus; quality criteria (e.g., outlining conventions, general purpose, thesis statements, intended consequences, organizational patterns and principles, functions performed in introductions and conclusions) are discussed in class. (Grading rubric for brief outlines is attached.)</p>	<p>The class average for the brief outline for their first speech is usually in the 40-60% range, and rapidly improves so that the final brief outline average (for their third speech) is in the 75-85% range</p>	<p>Again, the instructor can take advantage of trends in this area to try to improve brief outline critiques.</p>	
<p>3. Students will use effective rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.</p> <p>Students</p>	<p>The first of three graded speeches is to inform, the second is to persuade, and the third is the choice of the student. The distinction between</p>	<p>Any speech has both informative and persuasive elements, so the distinction is only one of emphasis</p>	<p>An instructor's guidance in this area comes primarily from the overall grades assigned to a student's speeches,</p>	

<p>should:</p> <p>Select and use the best means to deliver a particular message to a particular audience. Rhetorical strategies include but are not limited to modes (such as narration, description, and persuasion), genres (essays, web pages, reports, proposals), media and technology (PowerPoint™, electronic writing), and graphics (charts, diagrams, formats).</p> <p>(Continued)</p>	<p>speeches to inform and speeches to persuade are discussed in class and clearly illustrated in the web-posted informative and persuasive brief outlines.</p>	<p>regarding the speaker's general purpose. And this emphasis is but one of many elements (such as the audience, the available time, what the speaker hopes to accomplish) in the public speaking situation that will influence the speaker's strategy. All are discussed in the instructor's critique that follows the student critiques of each speaker. These are qualitative issues that are only quantified in the grades assigned to each of three speeches given by students for grade.</p>	<p>influenced by the student's brief outline accomplishments and the thoroughness of fellow student speeches.</p>	
<p><u>State Competencies</u></p> <p>(Learning</p>	<p><u>Assessment Procedures</u></p> <p>Course Name and</p>	<p><u>Assessment Results</u></p>	<p><u>How Results Will Be Used To Make</u></p>	<p><u>(Optional)</u></p> <p>Recommendations/Goals/</p>

Outcomes Being Measured)	NMCCN (Process/Instrument named or described – rubric attached)		<u>Improvements</u>	Priorities
<p>4. Students will employ writing and/or speaking processes such as planning, collaborating, organizing, composing, revising, and editing to create presentations using correct diction, syntax, grammar, and mechanics.</p> <p>Students should:</p> <p>Use standard processes for generating documents or oral presentations independently and in groups.</p>	<p>The results of speech planning are assessed using the rubric for grading the brief outlines (2) and (3) above). A standard approach to rehearsing, which includes practicing with a live audience, is suggested in class with attention to the functions of each rehearsal phase. The importance of constant revision during the rehearsal process is emphasized. The results of rehearsing are the speeches actually presented in class. As mentioned in (1) above, these are evaluated by three classmates using a standard evaluation form. Those evaluations are assessed according to the rubric already mentioned in (1) above.</p>	<p>Instructors offer suggestions about how to prepare outlines (brief outlines that represent preliminary planning, rehearsal outlines to be used during the first rehearsal phase, and speaking notes for use at the podium) and how to practice their speeches so they will sound natural and conversational. Instructors urge the use of a live audience of friends during the last phase of rehearsal. Such collaborative approaches are</p>	<p>Again, the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. If the critical comments of an instructor’s speech evaluations tend to cluster, the instructor must judge whether or not changes need to be made, and if they are needed, where in the process should the changes occur.</p>	

		encouraged, but not monitored. Only the final product, a speech delivered in class, is assessed.		
<p>5. Students will integrate research correctly and ethically from credible sources to support the primary purpose of a communication.</p> <p>Students should:</p> <p>Gather legitimate information to support ideas without plagiarizing, misinforming or distorting.</p>	<p>Since ENGL 101 is a prerequisite for this course, it is assumed that students understand the import of student honesty and integrity, standards we monitor.</p> <p>(Sources cited? Yes No)</p>	<p>Given the emphasis on academic honesty and integrity in the course syllabus and in the prerequisite ENGL 101 course, students regularly cite their sources in their brief outlines. When they don't, it's nearly always because they don't cite their own experience or knowledge, an important, but often overlooked credibility booster for public speeches.</p>	<p>Since our students frequently discuss personal issues or experiences as the basis for their speeches, the issue here is to encourage them to clarify early on that they are referring to their own knowledge or experience for the sake of credibility</p>	

<p>6. Students will engage in reasoned civic discourse while recognizing the distinctions among opinions, facts, and inferences.</p> <p>Students should:</p> <p>Negotiate civilly with others to accomplish goals and to function as responsible citizens. End -- Area I</p>	<p>There is not enough time during class to engage in civic discourse or negotiations, which are generally considered to be extracurricular activities. However, a pre- and post-test will be used to determine whether students can distinguish among opinions, facts, and inferences. (Pre- and post-test protocol attached.)</p>	<p>A pilot pre-/post-test was conducted during summer 2008 with a total of 23 students. Results clearly indicated that students were better able to distinguish among opinions, facts, and inferences at the end of the course compared to the first day of class (average improvement was 1.2).</p>	<p>Simply coding 0-3, indicating how many of the student's definitions were correct, is too gross a measure to be useful.</p>	<p>This trivial attempt to develop at least one data-bound assessment instrument has been abandoned in favor of a self-reporting instrument that taps student impressions of improvement in several student outcomes stated in the syllabus. [See final page of attached assessment protocols.]</p>

Area I Assessment completed by _____
9/26/2009

_____ **Ed Hall**

Date

Signature

Printed Name