**GEAC 2012-13 Assessment Summit**

**January 2013**

**Written Communication Skills (100 Level) Report**

The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC), co-chaired by Charles Wilson and Worth Pickering, developed a process for assessing all goals of the 2010 Revised General Education Curriculum plus critical thinking (a SCHEV requirement) on a four-year cycle. During 2011-12 assessment data were collected for Language and Culture, Written Communication Skills, and Critical Thinking. Language and Culture data were collected and analyzed by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature. GEAC convened the first Assessment Summit in January 2013 with the goal of training and calibrating raters to assess written artifacts, rating the written artifacts, and drafting reports of what is done well and what may need improvement in writing and critical thinking.

There are three goals of General Education (GE) that address writing – Written Communication Skills, 100 Level; Written Communication Skills, 200 Level; and Written Communication within the Major. Each goal has a unique set of student learning outcomes (SLO). This report addresses the entry level goal, Written Communication Skills, 100 Level which is addressed in ENGL 110C. Following are descriptions of the assessment methodology, results of the assessment, and recommendations for improving Written Communication Skills at the 100 Level.

**Methodology**

**Artifacts**

The artifacts for Written Communication Skills at the 100 Level were selected from ENGL 110C courses which is the only course that meets the requirement. The Director of Composition collects five printed portfolios from each new instructor each semester. He provided copies of 28 portfolios collected over the last year. Rather than read and rate one artifact GEAC decided that it was best to read and rate the entire portfolio.

**Rubrics**

GEAC developed rubrics for rating each one of the student learning outcomes (SLO) for each of the goals of general education. When possible the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) were used at least as a starting point for developing the ODU rubrics.

The VALUE rubrics did not align well with the ENGL 110C SLO so the rubric was developed by the Office of Assessment with guidance from the Director of Composition (see attached). The Assessment staff listed the nine SLO for ENGL 110 and wrote statements that demonstrated the four ratings of “Exceeds Standard,” “Meets Standard,” “Approaches Standard,” and “Needs Attention.” The rubric was reviewed by other Assessment staff, GEAC team members, and the Director of Composition. In addition, the first step of the calibration process with raters was to review and critique the rubric. Raters also made further adjustments to the rubric after rating the first few portfolios.

**Raters**

GEAC members recruited raters from among teaching and administrative faculty, retired faculty, adjunct faculty, and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). The raters for ENGL 110 were all adjunct faculty and GTAs, all of whom had taught ENGL 110.

**Calibration**

All groups engaged in the same calibration process. The ENGL 110C group was led by two members of the GEAC plus additional administrative faculty with special expertise in writing. The calibration process included:

1. Reviewing the 2010 Revised General Education Goal (or the VALUE Rubric for critical thinking which is not a specified goal of general education).
2. Reviewing the rubric, both the scale (“Exceeds Standard,” “Meets Standard,” “Approaches Standard,” and “Needs Attention”) and each individual SLO. Raters were instructed that GEAC expected that the “average” student should “Meet Standard.” Each SLO was reviewed with some discussion about the differences between the four scores. Minor edits were made to several of the rubrics.
3. Reading and rating sample artifacts.
   1. All raters and group leaders read and rated the same artifact. The leaders tallied the ratings and led discussions about why we chose different scores.
   2. The raters read a second and third sample (perhaps a fourth as well) using the same process until the leaders determined the raters were calibrated.

**Rating**

Raters were instructed that they would be using analytical scoring whereby they would read the portfolio completely one time and then score each SLO individually. Two raters read and rated each portfolio and the goal of calibration was to get to the point where the two raters would not differ by more than one point.

The raters read printed portfolios for ENGL 110 and scored the artifacts using Qualtrics, the University’s web based survey tool. Qualtrics allowed the Assessment Team to monitor the results and identify those SLO for each artifact on which raters disagreed by more than a point. A third rater was assigned to rate those artifacts and make the final decision.

The raters worked independently for approximately 6-8 hours over two days. GEAC members monitored the rating sessions and answered questions as they arose.

**Inter-Rater Reliability**

The ratings by the two raters who read each portfolio were compared to see if they matched, were off by one point, or were off by two or more points. In addition, raters were permitted to rate an SLO as Not Applicable (NA) if it was not addressed in the portfolio. The results of this analysis appear in the following table and show that other than the NA ratings all of the ratings for all of the portfolios were exact matches or off by one. There were three portfolios that required a third reader because they differed by more than one point on more than half of the SLO. The third rating was accepted as the final rating for those three portfolios.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ENGL 110C Inter-Rater Reliability** | | | | | | | | | |
| **SLO** | **Exact Match** | | **Off by 1** | | **Off by 2 or More** | | **Total** | | **NA** |
|  | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |  |
| **1** | 11 | 44 | 13 | 52 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 96 | 1 |
| **2** | 12 | 48 | 13 | 52 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 100 | 0 |
| **3** | 8 | 32 | 17 | 68 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 100 | 0 |
| **4** | 13 | 52 | 11 | 44 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 96 | 1 |
| **5** | 13 | 52 | 10 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 92 | 2 |
| **6** | 13 | 52 | 12 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 100 | 0 |
| **7** | 16 | 64 | 6 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 88 | 3 |
| **8** | 9 | 36 | 16 | 64 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 100 | 0 |
| **9** | 11 | 44 | 14 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 100 | 0 |

**Results for Written Communication Skills – 100 Level**

Following is a summary table of all of the ratings for all of the portfolios plus results of a debriefing of the moderators after they finished their ratings.

**Ratings**

The majority of the outcomes for ENGL 110 were rated as “Approaches Standard” or “Meets Standard” as seen in the table below. For most of the SLO the percentage of “Approaches Standard” ratings was greater than the “Meets Standard” rating suggesting that some discussion is warranted to determine if curricula, pedagogy, or assignments might be fine-tuned so that more students would “Meet Standard.” Two of the SLO revealed significant percentages of “Needs Attention” ratings – SLO 5, “distinguish between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas” (66%) and SLO 7, “practice appropriate means of documenting their work” (74%). Faculty should discuss how best to improve student learning in these areas.

**ENGL 110C (28 Papers)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Exceeds Standard | Meets Standard | Approaches Standard | Needs Attention |
| 1. abstract and summarize the content of texts in a range of disciplines. | 0% | 21% | 45% | 32% |
| 2. analyze both their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria (e.g., organization towards a purpose or effect; use of assumptions and appeals appropriate to the targeted audience and situation). | 0% | 36% | 55% | 9% |
| 3. analyze arguments, including uses of assumptions, claims, emotion and reason. | 0% | 26% | 64% | 9% |
| 4. move from analysis to evaluation, judging texts for effectiveness and credibility. | 0% | 21% | 58% | 19% |
| 5. distinguish between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas. | 0% | 4% | 26% | 66% |
| 6. edit their own writing to ensure that it is reasonably free of errors in such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, & spelling. | 0% | 17% | 70% | 13% |
| 7. practice appropriate means of documenting their work. | 0% | 4% | 17% | 74% |
| 8. analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information so as to formulate adequate theses moving beyond the scope of reporting information to composing papers that express their reasoned judgments on their topics. | 0% | 42% | 45% | 13% |
| 9. practice writing as a process and apply the writing process to a variety of contexts. | 2% | 57% | 40% | 2% |

**Debriefing**

After all of the ratings were completed, the raters were debriefed and asked about (a) the calibration and rating process, in particular how reliable and valid they found it to be; (b) student learning, especially the areas of strength and areas that need improvement; and (c) recommendations for other faculty who teach ENGL 110C.

**Process**. The calibration process was initially challenging because of the differences between the SLO required by the 2010 Revised General Education Curriculum and those taught by faculty. However, upon completion the raters were able to rate most of the SLO for most of the portfolios in the “Approaches Standard” and “Meets Standard” categories. The raters expressed concern that all of the portfolios were collected from new faculty so were not representative of all of the course sections taught. They also stated that they had some difficulty applying the rubric to the artifacts. In short, once the raters learned the rubric they were able to score the portfolios accurately. However, we need to do a better job of sampling the portfolios in future assessments so they are more representative of ENGL 110C courses..

**Student Learning.** The reason for the raters’ difficulty with using the rubric to rate the portfolios became apparent in the discussion about student learning – the English Department identified slightly different outcomes for ENGL 110 than appear in the 2010 Revised General Education Curriculum. The raters, all of whom had taught ENGL 110, thus were unfamiliar with the SLO in the rubric and had some difficulty adjusting to the rubric. They also thought that the SLO in the rubric might be better aligned with the ENGL 200 level course content. Clearly there were differences between the SLO faculty addressed in their ENGL 110 courses and the SLO included in the rubric to assess the artifacts.

Despite the initial difficulties of adjusting to the SLO in the rubric, as the raters assessed the individual SLO, they found several areas of strength. Upon completing the course, students were able to:

* abstract and summarize the content of texts in a range of disciplines (SLO 1).
* analyze both their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria (e.g., organization towards a purpose or effect; use of assumptions and appeals appropriate to the targeted audience and situation) (SLO 2).
* analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information so as to formulate adequate theses moving beyond the scope of reporting information to composing papers that express their reasoned judgments on their topics (SLO 8).
* practice writing as a process and apply the writing process to a variety of contexts (SLO 9).

They also found several SLO in which students need to improve. Students were not as capable of:

* + moving from analysis to evaluation, judging texts for effectiveness and credibility (SLO 4).
  + distinguishing between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas (SLO 5).
  + editing their own writing to ensure that it is reasonably free of errors in such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling (SLO 6).
  + practicing appropriate means of documenting their work (SLO 7).

**Recommendations.** The raters were asked to suggest what they might do differently if they taught ENGL 110C again or what they would recommend to their colleagues teaching ENGL 110C. They suggested:

* Provide more examples to adjuncts on the many ways they could address the SLO in various assignments.
* Link assignments to SLO to help students understand what they are doing and why (transparent pedagogy)
* Revise the General Education SLO because they are not reflective of what faculty in ENGL 110C are teaching

**Summary and Recommendations**

While there were some initial problems with the alignment between the SLO defined by the 2010 Revised General Education curriculum and those recommended by the English Department, the raters were able to overcome the challenges, complete their work assessing 28 ENGL 110C portfolios, and make recommendations for consideration by the English faculty. The initial problem was that the rubric was designed to rate the nine SLO for ENGL 110C as defined by the 2010 Revised General Education Curriculum but the faculty taught a slightly different list of SLO for the course. Once the raters adjusted they were able to successfully rate the portfolios and determine that most of the portfolios Approached Standard or Met Standard for seven of the SLO. For six of those SLO more portfolios were rated as Approaches vs. Meets the Standard. For one SLO more portfolios were rated Meets than Approaches. The greater concern is that the majority of the portfolios were rated Needs Attention for two SLO – distinguish between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas and practice appropriate means of documenting their work. Thus, eight of the nine SLO need some attention in order to move student portfolios towards Meets Standard on all SLO. When debriefing the raters they identified four of the SLO as areas of strength even though that conflicted with the actual average ratings. They also identified four SLO that need improvement, including the two previously mentioned, so again there was a difference between raters’ perceptions and their actual ratings.

Several recommendations for discussion among the English faculty are as follows.

* Engage in discussion about the ratings and comments of the raters considering the SLO identified by the 2010 Revised General Education Curriculum and the guidance given to adjuncts teaching ENGL 110C. What is being done well? What improvements might be made?
* Consider the recommendations of the raters, all of whom teach ENGL 110C.
* Work with the Office of Assessment to randomly select a more representative sample of portfolios on subsequent assessments.
* Consider engaging in a discussion with Faculty Senate Committee A about reconciling the differences between the General Education Curriculum and what is taught in ENGL 110C.

**Questions or More Information**

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**ENGL 110C Rubric**

**Note: Raters are encouraged to assign a zero to any paper or collection of papers that does not meet the minimum criterion of “Needs Attention”**

**OR does not address the student learning outcome**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Learning Outcomes – Upon completing the first-year 100-level writing skills course, students will be able to:** | **Exceeds Standard**  **4** | **Meets Standard**  **3** | **Approaches Standard**  **2** | **Needs Attention**  **1** |
| ***abstract and summarize the content of texts in a range of disciplines.*** | **Skillfully abstracts** and **integrates** the content of texts in a range of disciplines | **Accurately abstracts** and **summarizes** the content of texts in a range of disciplines | **Inadequately abstracts** and **summarizes** the content of texts in a range of disciplines | **Fails to adequately abstract** and **summarize** the content of texts in a range of disciplines |
| ***analyze both their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria (e.g., organization towards a purpose or effect; use of assumptions and appeals appropriate to the targeted audience and situation).*** | Paper(s) demonstrate **skillful** **analysis and synthesis** of their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria | Paper(s) demonstrate **accurate** **analysis** of their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria | Paper(s) demonstrate **inadequate** **analysis** of their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria | Paper(s) **fails to demonstrate** **adequate** **analysis** of their texts and the texts of others based on rhetorical criteria |
| ***analyze arguments, including uses of assumptions, claims, emotion***  ***and reason.*** | Paper(s) demonstrate **skillful analysis and synthesis** of arguments, including use of assumptions, claims, emotion and reason | Paper(s) demonstrate **accurate analysis** of arguments, including use of assumptions, claims, emotion and reason | Paper(s) demonstrate **inadequate analysis** of arguments, including use of assumptions, claims, emotion and reason | Paper(s) **fails to demonstrate** **accurate analysis** of arguments, including use of assumptions, claims, emotion and reason |
| ***move from analysis to evaluation, judging texts for effectiveness and credibility.*** | **Skillful analysis supports thorough** evaluation of texts | **Accurate analysis adequately supports** evaluation of texts | **Inadequate analysis** **partially supports** evaluation of texts | **Poor analysis fails to support** evaluation of texts |
| **Student Learning Outcomes – Upon completing the first-year 100-level writing skills course, students will be able to:** | **Exceeds Standard**  **4** | **Meets Standard**  **3** | **Approaches Standard**  **2** | **Needs Attention**  **1** |
| ***distinguish between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas.*** | **Skillfully identifies, distinguishes, and integrates** both scholarly  and popular treatments of ideas | **Adequately identifies and distinguishes** between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas | **Inadequately identifies and distinguishes** between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas | **Fails to adequately identify and distinguish** between scholarly and popular treatments of ideas |
| ***edit their own writing to ensure that it is reasonably free of errors in such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, & spelling.*** | **No errors in mechanics** suggests that the writer has **effectively edited** their own writing | **Few errors in mechanics** suggests that the writer has **sufficiently edited** their own writing | **Some errors in mechanics** suggests that the writer has **not sufficiently edited** their own writing | **Many errors in mechanics** suggests that the writer has **not edited** their own writing |
| ***practice appropriate means of documenting their work.*** | **All references** are correctly documented | **Most references** are correctly documented | **Some references** are correctly documented | **Few references** are correctly documented or references are not documented |
| ***analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information so as to formulate adequate theses moving beyond the scope of reporting information to composing papers that express their reasoned judgments on their topics.*** | Paper(s) demonstrate **skillful analysis, evaluation, and synthesis that moves significantly** beyond the scope of reporting information | Paper(s) demonstrate **adequate analysis, evaluation, and synthesis that moves** beyond the scope of reporting information | Paper(s) demonstrate **inadequate analysis, evaluation, and/or synthesis that fails to move** beyond the scope of reporting information | Paper(s) **fail to demonstrate adequate analysis, evaluation, and/or synthesis and does not move** beyond the scope of reporting information |
| ***practice writing as a process and apply the writing process to a variety***  ***of contexts.*** | Paper(s) reflect **significant** practice with the writing process | Paper(s) reflect **sufficient** practice with the writing process | Paper(s) reflect **some** practice with the writing process | Paper(s) reflect **insufficient** practice with the writing process |