

**General Education Assessment
2016-17 Results for Written Communication Skills, 100 level Courses**

Executive Summary

In May 2017, faculty assessed 50 written artifacts to determine the extent to which students were achieving the specified General Education outcomes of 100-level composition courses. A majority of artifacts were rated as exceeds or meets standard on three of the four ENGL 110C outcomes. The lowest rated outcome was *knowledge of conventions*. Recommendations from faculty raters included encouraging faculty who teach the courses to review and align assignments with outcomes, as well as conducting a rubric calibration or assessment session with faculty once a year.

A description of the methodology, results and recommendations can be found in the full report below. Other information, such as the rubric, can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment's website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

Written Communication Skills, 100 level Report

As part of Old Dominion University's general education requirement, students must complete the written communication requirements at the lower division level. The lower division written communication skills are taught in the English 100-level composition courses (ENGL 110C). The criteria approved by Faculty Senate for ENGL 110C courses includes:

- A. Develop rhetorical knowledge by:
 - Analyzing and composing multiple forms of writing to understand how genre conventions shape readers' and writers' practices and purposes;
 - Practicing purposeful shifts in structure, content, diction, tone, formality, design, and/or medium in accordance with the rhetorical situation.
- B. Develop critical thinking, reading, and information literacy skills by:
 - Composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating,
 - Using outside materials in their own writing through techniques such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign,
 - Incorporating outside materials through quotations, paraphrase, and summary.
- C. Develop effective strategies for drafting texts by:
 - Working through multiple drafts of a project and recognizing the role of reflecting, revising, and editing in the process,
 - Engaging in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes, such as learning to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress, both by and with peers and in one-on-one instructor conferences,
 - Critically reflecting on how they may further develop and apply writing skills in the future.
- D. Develop knowledge of conventions by:
 - Demonstrating competency in grammar, punctuation, and spelling,
 - Practicing genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone and mechanics,

- Understanding the concepts of intellectual property that motivate documentation conventions through application of recognized citation styles.

Methodology

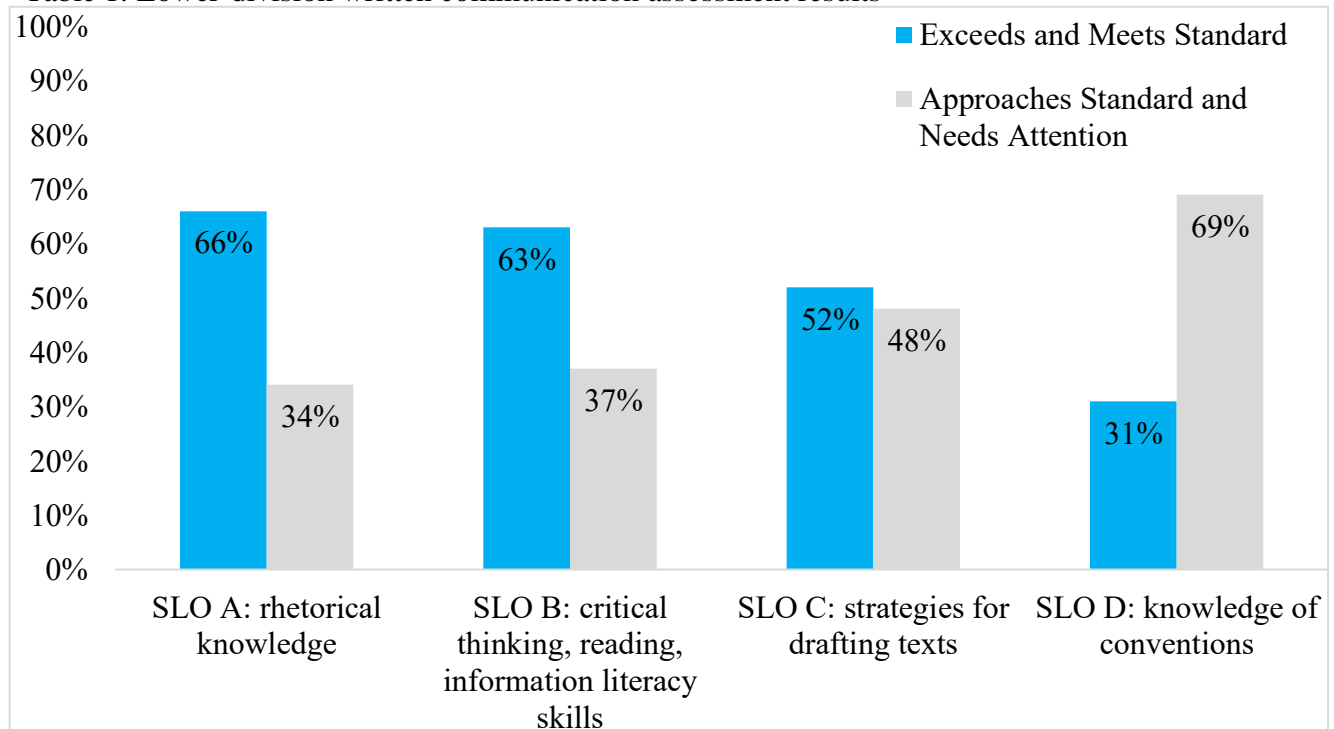
Faculty from the English department created a rubric to assess ENGL 110C outcomes. A two-day assessment summit was convened in May 2017, where four faculty read and rated a representative random sample of student artifacts from the ENGL 110C courses. During the morning of the first day, a rubric calibration session was conducted. Faculty first thoroughly reviewed and discussed the rubric and then independently applied the rubric to three sample artifacts. Raters shared their ratings and discussed any differences that arose after each “round” of rating. This discussion helped faculty come to a common understanding of what the student learning outcomes (SLO) meant and what to look for when rating the artifacts using the rubric’s scale: exceeds standard, meets standard, approaches standard, needs attention. Once individual ratings on a shared artifact did not differ by more than one point, raters were given a set of 25 artifacts to rate. The artifacts were read twice by faculty and scored using the rubric. If faculty ratings differed by more than 1 point on the majority of the outcomes, the artifact was sent to a third reader.

None of the 50 artifacts reviewed required a third read due to discrepancies in ratings. A full description of the methodology, including inter-rater reliability data and the rubric can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment’s website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

Results

An overview of the findings by SLO is presented in Table 1. A majority of artifacts were rated as exceeds or meets standard on three of the four ENGL 110C outcomes (SLO A – 66%, B – 63% and C – 52%). The lowest rated outcome was SLO D: *knowledge of conventions* (31% exceeds or meets standard).

Table 1. Lower-division written communication assessment results



Faculty Rater Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion

At the end of the second day, faculty were asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of students. Faculty noted that students met expectations for genre and rhetorical situation knowledge (SLO A) but approached expectations when it comes to critical thinking, synthesis, and mechanics (SLO B and D). Faculty who participated in the assessment of lower-division written communication skills in 2011-12 mentioned that students' critical thinking, reading and information literacy skills "are better than five years ago", but they are still unable to analyze and interpret information. Another area of weakness was students' *knowledge of conventions* (SLO D). Faculty observed that there were structural and mechanical errors that interfered with the artifacts content and meaning.

Recommendations

Faculty raters who also have taught ENGL 110C identified the following recommendations to improve student learning in the courses:

- Encourage faculty to review the outcomes when designing assignments and identify the outcomes addressed in the assignments
- Have students write about the outcomes in relation to their field
- Make sure the students know the outcomes and understand their purpose
- Discuss the SLO's with the faculty
- Move away from "fun" assignments towards Writing About Writing
- Do calibration with faculty periodically (once a semester)
- Practice assessment in the spring writing conference

Plan to Improve Learning

- Consider reviewing assignment to align with and/or emphasize outcomes

Faculty Senate Recommendations

- Faculty Senate Committee A reviewed the General Education Assessment results for Written Communication skills in 100-level courses during 2017-2018. Committee A accepted the report and provided no recommendations.