

First Year Writing Assessment Report: Fall 2017-Spring 2018

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Summary

In the 2017-2018 cycle, we assessed these outcomes:

- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

Results consistent with other outcomes measured in prior years were found with the Citation Conventions outcome (71% scoring satisfactory or higher), though there was a decrease in the Locate and Evaluate Sources outcome (59%). We attribute this to a mixture of ENGL 101 portfolios in the sample, a class where citation conventions and research strategies are not covered to the same extent as ENGL 101 and possibly also some wider than normal variation among instructors' approaches to teaching this aspect of the curriculum. If you remove ENGL 101 portfolios from the sample, the satisfactory outcome rate rises to 70%.

Another factor is that we evaluated a smaller sample of portfolios than in previous years. The expected error of the sample is thus greater. The portfolios average about 25 pages in length, and the amount of time that it took to evaluate them last semester was not commensurable with our resources or sustainable.

Procedure

A total of 75 students in First Year Writing courses (ENGL 101 and ENGL 102) in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 were selected randomly from an enrollment list given by the registrar. Of those 75 portfolios requested, a total of 49 were submitted by the instructors. Some of the missing portfolios were from students who did not complete the course and did not have a portfolio to submit. Others were from instructors who did not comply with the request.

Each portfolio was read and scored by two members of the First Year Writing office. The scores were averaged together for the final measurement. We performed a norming session before the scoring began.

Results

The average (mean) for the Citing Sources outcome was 3.14. For Locating and Evaluating Sources, it was 3.06. 71% of the students evaluated scored 3 or higher on the Citing Sources outcome, whereas 59% scored 3 or higher on Locating and Evaluating Sources. Interrater reliability was approximately consistent with prior assessments, with the Locating and Evaluating Sources outcome having a higher interrater agreement than Citation Conventions. (Both standard deviation of the absolute difference between ratings and a weighted Cohen's Kappa test were used to test interrater reliability.) I attribute this discrepancy to the understandable latitude that raters have when it comes to assessing the spirit versus the letter of the law when it comes to complex citation formats, the precise details of which few instructors expect their students to master completely.

Actions

At the beginning of the fall 2017 semester, during the orientation for new graduate students on teaching assistantships, Clancy Ratliff introduced a new assignment, the Source Dialogue, which she noticed in Jeanna Mason's courses. She asked Jeanna to do a brief talk during orientation that explained this assignment. Because the Source Dialogue assignment is a systematic approach to evaluating the quality of sources (speaking to the outcome on locating and evaluating sources), we are going to make the Source Dialogue a program-wide assignment, providing support for all teachers in the First-Year Writing Program for giving this assignment, in the form of workshops during orientation and the English 501 and 509 courses (the pedagogy seminars), as well as documentation for the assignment including sample student work in our repository of teaching materials on Moodle.

Another part of our action plan addresses the other outcome, "practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work." In a review of the specific weaknesses we found, we noted that the main area of improvement is in-text citation: citations that are embedded in the students' writing, rather than the lists of references at the ends of writing projects. We are going to include more attention to in-text citation techniques in our pedagogy seminars, English 501 and 509.

Appendix (First Year Writing Outcomes)

- Students in the University of Louisiana at Lafayette's First-Year Writing Program will:
- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources

- Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work
- While instructors may have assignment-specific rubrics for the purposes of grading, the following rubrics will be useful in assessing overall performance in 101 and 102 courses.

Outcome	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Develop a writing project through multiple drafts	No evidence of engagement with writing process: Missing deadlines for rough drafts Submitting fewer than the required number of drafts for each writing project	Mostly consistent engagement with writing process: Meeting deadlines for rough drafts Submitting the number of drafts required for each writing project	Excellent engagement with writing process: Meeting all deadlines for rough drafts or submitting them in advance of deadlines Submitting more drafts than are required

Outcome	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress	Not participating in peer response activities, or minimal feedback on peers' drafts Missing scheduled office conferences, or attending unprepared Not acting on or reflecting on feedback received	Participating in peer response activities, providing mostly useful feedback for peers Participating in scheduled office conferences and being prepared in advance Reflecting on feedback received and acting on most feedback	Excellent participation in peer response activities, providing consistently productive feedback for peers Participating in scheduled office conferences, being prepared in advance, and seeking additional Insightfully reflecting on feedback received, substantially revising according to feedback

Outcome	Specific Skills	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful	Effectiveness of tone/voice according to conventions of the genre	Excessive insertion of (or suppression of) writerly presence in tone/voice according to	Writerly presence in tone/voice that is mostly appropriate for the genre	Writerly presence in tone/voice that is appropriate for the genre

shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure		conventions of the genre		
	Consistency of tone/voice	Jarring shifts in voice or tone in the same piece of writing	Voice and tone are mostly consistent throughout the piece of writing	Tone and voice are consistent throughout the piece of writing
	Formality in document formatting/presentation and style conventions	Document features (line spacing, font, margins, page numbering, etc.) fail to meet expectations of the genre Writing contains many sentence-level errors (several per paragraph)	Document features mostly meet expectations of the genre Writing is mostly free of sentence-level errors (1-2 per page)	Document features meet expectations of the genre in every respect Writing is almost completely free of sentence-level errors (1-2 per paper)
Outcome	Specific Skills	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on), including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained	Use of library resources	Inability to navigate stacks Inability to use library databases, overreliance on internet search engines	Basic knowledge of how to find books in stacks Knowledge of one or two library databases	Knowledge of LOC numbers in student's own areas of interest Knowledge of several library databases
	Evaluating sources	Using sources that are outdated, not credible, inaccurate, or insufficient	Using sources that are mostly current, credible, accurate, and sufficient Some recognition of bias	Using sources that are current, credible, accurate, and sufficient Recognition of bias most of the time

databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources		Not recognizing bias		
Outcome	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding	
Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, and critique,—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources	Data dump from sources (very little or none of student's own analysis); Source material is presented passively	Mostly even balance of student's ideas with outside sources Some knowledge of moves in They Say/I Say – agreement, disagreement, etc.	Even balance of student's ideas with those of outside sources Source use is purposeful: variety of strategies of engagement such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique	
Outcome	Poor	Satisfactory	Outstanding	
Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work	Not understanding what information needs to be cited or why Source information not integrated well at the sentence level – patchwriting Works Cited pages not present or not formatted according to a specific documentation style (MLA, etc.)	Basic understanding of citation norms and concept of common knowledge Basic understanding of attributive tags and in-text citation: conventions of quoting and paraphrasing Works Cited pages present and formatted in a specific documentation style (MLA, etc.), though some errors may be present	Nuanced understanding of citation norms and sophisticated concept of common knowledge Strong understanding of attributive tags and in-text citation: conventions of quoting and paraphrasing Works Cited pages present and formatted in a specific documentation style (MLA, etc.) with minimal formatting errors	