

Institutional Effectiveness Report Academic Year 2010-2011 English Composition

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Program Mission and Goals

The mission and rationale for the writing sequence is based primarily upon two related concepts. The first is the notion of decentering, which holds that developing writers find it easiest to write about themselves and the things that are most important to them. As their writing skills develop, they become more adept at writing to people and about subjects that are beyond their own personal perceptual sphere. The second basic concept underlying the sequence of courses is the idea (from James Kinneavy) that a basic communications triangle (addresser-message-addressee) can become a heuristic for identifying distinct types of discourse depending upon the emphasis of each type.

Generally speaking, the emphasis in English 111 is on addresser (expressive discourse), in English 112 on addressee (transactional discourse and argument), and in English 200 on message (referential). The progression of composition courses moves students from I-centered writing into writing that is focused on creating arguments appropriate for academic and professional audiences; and the final course in the sequence is largely oriented around writing in various academic disciplines.

Given the above sequence, there are four primary goals for student performance in the composition courses:

1. The ability to use language conventions appropriately.
2. The ability to develop ideas interesting to the audience and appropriate to the context.
3. The ability to organize ideas for clarity and logic.
4. The ability to use information from external sources appropriately.

Although the following report provides various types of information regarding student performance, the centerpiece of the composition assessment process is the student writing assessment, which occurs each January. There are four groups of papers read in the student writing assessment: English 111 papers, English 112 papers, English 200 papers, and full portfolios of work consisting of either six papers (two each from English 111, 112, and 200) or four papers (two each from English 112 and English 200, representing the work of those students who were exempt from English 111). Papers are scored using the four criteria listed above and the course goals for each individual course.

Assessment Activities

1. Student Writing Assessment

We collected writing samples from students who had completed at least one course in the composition sequence in the spring, summer, or fall of 2010. From these portfolios, we chose to read and assess a total of 176 papers. We read 36 English 111 papers, 30 English 112 papers, 30 English 200 papers, and 22 “full portfolios” (a total of 80 papers) which consisted of either two papers each from English 111, 112, and 200 or two papers each from English 112 and English 200 (representing the work of those students who were exempt from English 111).

For the individual courses (from English 111, 112, or 200), each paper was read three times and was scored for both the four composition program goals and for the individual course goals established by the Department. Each full portfolio was also read three times using a new assessment rubric which enabled readers to indicate if the writing improved in specific skill areas.

The scoring involved a blind system: readers did not know the names of students or their instructors. Furthermore, second and third readers did not have access to first and second readers’ scores.

2. Writing Attitude Survey

The Composition Program conducted a writing attitude survey among all students taking a composition course in fall 2010. This survey was completed by 855 students or about 61% of fall composition students. The responses to key items were compared with survey results from past years.

3. Praxis I

For the past twelve years (1999-2010) all students wishing to qualify as education majors took the PRAXIS I Writing Exam. The percentage of students passing is a rough indication of the quality of preparation in their writing courses.

4. Performance Comparison of Students Starting in Different Composition Courses

Performance of students starting the composition sequence in English 111 and English 112 was compared through spring and fall 2010. Areas of comparison were average SAT verbal scores as well as composition grade point averages. All students taking English 111 and/or 112 in spring or fall 2010 were included in this study.

Results and Evaluation

1. Student Writing Assessment

In 2006, we altered the student assessment so that papers were read for both the programmatic goals and also for the goals that were specific to each course. We believe that this more detailed data will allow us to make more informed choices about teaching methods, the focus of professional development workshops, and the curriculum in general.

Additionally, we decided to change the scoring system from a 1-4 point scale to a checkmark system. The 1-4 scale used in previous years produced numbers that were not easily translated into action items. Therefore, we have adopted a checkmark system where instructors rate each student paper in the English 111, 112, and 200 groups with a checkmark if the student is competent in a particular area.

Each paper was read three times, and only those items marked by at least two evaluators were counted in the results. We were able to then ascertain what percentage of students are considered “competent” or “not competent” in both the four programmatic goals and the individual course goals.

In addition to the groups reading papers from 111, 112, and 200, one group read “full portfolios.” This group was asked to note the areas in which the writer showed progress. Reading these full portfolios enables us to get a sense of how, or if, students are progressing as they move through the composition sequence.

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

Goal A. The ability to use language conventions appropriately

Goal A. The ability to use language conventions appropriately (percentages indicate percentage of students deemed “competent” in this area)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
English 111	75%	89%	84%	61%	60%
English 112	95%	80%	91%	74%	60%
English 200	93%	90%	67%	65%	60%
Average	86%	86%	81%	67%	60%

Goal B. The ability to develop ideas interesting to the audience and appropriate to the context.

Goal B: The ability to develop ideas interesting to the audience and appropriate to the context (percentages indicate percentage of students deemed “competent” in this area)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
English 111	85%	64%	84%	82%	71%
English 112	75%	77%	75%	67%	70%
English 200	53%	85%	72%	65%	83%
Average	71%	75%	77%	71%	75%

Goal C. The ability to organize ideas for clarity and logic

Goal C. The ability to organize ideas for clarity and logic (percentages indicate percentage of students deemed “competent” in this area)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
English 111	75%	80%	87%	87%	71%
English 112	50%	80%	51%	58%	40%
English 200	35%	40%	39%	57%	43%
Average	53%	67%	59%	67%	51%

Goal D. The ability to use external resources appropriately

Goal D. The ability to use external sources appropriately (percentages indicate percentage of students deemed “competent” in this area)					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
English 111	100%; 24% N/A	42%; 58% N/A	48%; 52% N/A	30%; 77% N/A	N/A
English 112	45% 23% N/A	49% 13% N/A	50% 29% N/A	36% 49% N/A	43% 23%N/A
English 200	45%	80%	17%	57%	67%
Average	63%	57%	38%	41%	55%

*N/A or “not applicable” is applied to all papers where external sources were not required.

Analysis of Data for Programmatic Goals: We are pleased with the competency level of students in relation to Goal B. However, we need to address the low scores for Goals A, C, and D. In order to address these concerns, the composition coordinators will assemble some articles and classroom activities to help composition instructors teach organization in their classes. Furthermore, the program will host a workshop early in the Fall 2011 semester on teaching students how to use the handbook that is required for all composition classes.

INDIVIDUAL COURSE ASSESSMENT

In addition to charting the four programmatic goals, the Composition Program now charts the goals that are specific to each course. We believe that this information will give us a more detailed picture of what students are learning in individual courses and will also inform programmatic decisions regarding professional development workshops and curriculum changes.

English 111

The four goals for English 111 are closely related to the four basic goals of the Composition Program; therefore, in assessing these papers, we read only for competency in these four areas.

Goal Description	2007	2008	2009	2010
Writing is organized logically and effectively	80%	87%	87%	71%
Writing indicates the writer’s recognition of a specific rhetorical situation and audience and indicates a deliberate use of clear techniques relative to the purpose and situation	64%	84%	82%	71%
Sources are documented thoroughly and competently (if applicable)	42% 58% N/A	48% 52% N/A	30% 77% N/A	N/A
Writing generally follows academic conventions of spelling, grammar, and style	89%	84%	61%	60%

English 112

English 112 is a course in argumentation, emphasizing the analysis and production of argumentative texts—both textual and/or visual. Therefore, our evaluation of English 112 papers includes factors that are specifically related to argument and using sources to support arguments.

Goal Description	2007	2008	2009	2010
Writing is organized logically and effectively	53%	51%	58%	40%
Writing indicates the writer’s recognition of a specific rhetorical situation and audience and indicates a deliberate use of clear techniques relative to the purpose and situation	77%	75%	74%	70%
Writing generally follows academic conventions of spelling, grammar, and style	80%	91%	74%	60%
Claims are clearly stated	77%	80%	84%	70%
Arguments are well-reasoned and convincing	45%	56%	47%	23%
Arguments show an awareness of opposing positions	39%	44%	33%	37%
Sources are appropriate for the audience	86%; 13% N/A	84%; 29% N/A	68%; 49% N/A	71%; 30% N/A
Sources are documented thoroughly and competently	49%; 13% N/A	50%; 29% N/A	36%; 49% N/A	43%; 23% N/A

English 200

English 200 builds on the research and argumentation skills introduced in English 112 and asks students to explore texts with greater depth and write projects that require the careful reading and integration of multiple sources. Students read, critique and synthesize materials from a variety of longer and/or more complex sources than those read in English 112 and from a variety of disciplines to form reasoned arguments which indicate the students’ engagement in the subject and its relevance to their lives and the larger world outside of the academy. Therefore, to assess English 200 papers, we evaluate the students’ ability to both document sources and incorporate them smoothly and responsibly into their writing (see next page).

Goal Description	2007	2008	2009	2010
Writing is organized logically and effectively	40%	39%	57%	43%
Writing indicates the writer's recognition of a specific rhetorical situation and audience and indicates a deliberate use of clear techniques relative to the purpose and situation	85%	72%	65%	83%
Writing generally follows academic conventions of spelling, grammar, and style	90%	67%	65%	60%
Arguments are well-reasoned and convincing	45%	39%	61%	47%
Sources are appropriate for the audience	95%; 5% N/A	89%	96%	80%
Sources are synthesized effectively	60%	28%	48%	60%
Sources are documented thoroughly and competently	80%	17%	57%	67%
Sources act as support	65%	72%	74%	67%

Analysis of Individual Course Goals Assessment: We are concerned about some of the lower scores for both English 112 and English 200, particularly those items related to reasoning, organization, and source documentation. Our workshop on teaching students how to use the handbook will address these areas. Additionally, when we review English 112 books next year, we will focus on choosing books with a strong emphasis in argumentation and documenting research.

Accuracy of Scoring: All English 111, 112, and 200 papers were read three times. The result common to two of the three evaluators was recorded.

FULL PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

English instructors read approximately 80 papers compiled in “full” portfolios which consisted of either two papers each from English 111, 112, and 200 or two papers each from English 112 and English 200 (representing the work of those students who were exempt from English 111).

In the fall of 2010, members of FWAC reviewed the assessment of full portfolios and concluded that we need to give the portfolio readers more skill areas to consider and more choices in their responses. So additional skill areas were added to the scoresheets, and instructors were able to assess improvement by answering the question “Did these skills improve from English 111 to English 112?” and “Did these skills improve from English 112 to English 200” with one of the following options:

- Yes
- No—this was a strength in both courses
- No—this was a weakness in both courses
- No—this was uneven throughout
- Not Applicable

Our findings indicate that more than half of the students who take English 111 and 112, show improvement or were consistently strong in the following areas:

- Combining ideas from outside sources with her/his ideas
- Correctly citing sources
- Using correct spelling and grammar
- Making effective stylistic choices

We found that students were weak or uneven in the following areas:

- Providing a clear thesis
- Using reasons to support arguments
- Representing and/or refuting opposing viewpoints
- Effectively organizing ideas
- Creating flow between ideas and paragraphs
- Interesting and engaging the audience in the topic
- Establishing credibility with the audience
- Developing an engaging voice

Our findings indicate that more than half of the students who take English 112 and 200, show improvement or were consistently strong from the beginning of 112 to the end of 200 in the following areas:

- Using reasons to support argument
- Providing adequate explanation and information
- Combining ideas from outside sources with her/his ideas
- Using correct spelling and grammar
- Making effective stylistic choices

We found that students were weak or uneven in the following areas:

- Providing a clear thesis
- Responding to the rhetorical situation with appropriate techniques
- Representing and/or refuting opposing viewpoints
- Effectively organizing ideas
- Interesting and engaging the audience in the topic
- Establishing credibility with the audience
- Avoiding logical fallacies
- Synthesizing sources
- Developing an engaging voice

Analysis of Full Portfolio Assessment: Students are improving their writing in certain areas; for example, we are encouraged to see that students—both those moving into 112 and those leaving 200—were strong already or improved in their ability to combine ideas from sources, use correct grammar and spelling, and make effective stylistic choices.

Many of the areas labeled “weak” or “uneven throughout” are those related to persuasive writing. In writing arguments it is particularly important to establish credibility, respond to the audience, present the opinions of others, and bring together multiple sources as support for claims. Students are introduced to most of these skills in English 112, and it may be that the faculty should review its 112 textbooks and goals to ensure that students are practicing these vital argument skills throughout both this course and into 200.

Accuracy of Scoring: Each full portfolio was read three times, and those items marked by two evaluators were included in these results. However, if the assessment for an item was inconsistent among the readers, it was considered “uneven throughout.”

2. Writing Attitude Survey

Below are results for responses to key items on the Writing Attitude Survey, which is administered each fall to all composition students.

Has this course helped you to improve your writing? (Percentages refer to those answering “yes.”)

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010
English 111	86%	90%	88%	89%	93%
English 112	87%	93%	91%	91%	85%
English 200	81%	81%	90%	74%	88%
Average	85%	88%	90%	85%	89%

How would you rate your general attitude towards this course? (Percentages refer to those answering “very” or “mostly satisfied.”)

	Fall 2006	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010
English 111	71%	77%	85%	83%	84%
English 112	72%	86%	77%	83%	80%
English 200	64%	74%	81%	59%	77%
Average	69%	77%	85%	75%	80%

**How would you rate your general attitude towards the English 111 Lab?
(Percentages refer to those answering “very” or “mostly satisfied.”)**

Fall 2006	80%
Fall 2007	84%
Fall 2008	82%
Fall 2009	97%
Fall 2010	87%

**If you took English 112, to what extent do you feel that English 111 prepared you for English 112?
(Percentages refer to those answering “very well” or “somewhat.”)**

Fall 2006	87%
Fall 2007	92%
Fall 2008	85%
Fall 2009	91%
Fall 2010	98%

**If you took English 200, to what extent do you feel that English 112 prepared you for English 200?
(Percentages refer to those answering “very well” or “somewhat.”)**

Fall 2006	100%
Fall 2007	89%
Fall 2008	91%
Fall 2009	86%
Fall 2010	92%

ANALYSIS: These numbers tell us that students are having a positive experience in their composition courses and in the English 111 Lab, and they believe that these courses help them to become better writers. We are also pleased that an overwhelming majority of students feel as though each course in the composition sequence prepares them for the next.

3. PRAXIS I

January 2005 through December 2005

The PRAXIS I test was administered 210 times to students at FMU, most of whom completed their composition work at FMU. There were 101 passes (48%) overall.

January 2006 through December 2006

The PRAXIS I test was administered 174 times to students at FMU, most of whom completed their composition work at FMU. There were 94 passes (54%) overall.

January 2007 through December 2007

The PRAXIS I test was administered 210 times to students at FMU, most of whom completed their composition work at FMU. There were 114 passes (54%) overall.

January 2008 through December 2008

The PRAXIS I test was administered 130 times to students at FMU, most of whom completed their composition work at FMU. There were 66 passes (51%) overall.

January 2009 through December 2009

The PRAXIS I test was administered 155 times to students at FMU, most of whom completed their composition work at FMU. There were 76 passes (48%) overall.

January 2010 through December 2010

The PRAXIS I test was administered 132 times to students at FMU. There were 72 passes overall (55%).

Analysis: The Writing Center is now offering a workshop for students taking the PRAXIS. We hope that this workshop will help with the overall pass rate.

4. Performance Comparison of Students Starting in Different Composition Courses:

Comparison of 112 performance of students who completed 111 before taking 112 to students who did not take 111.

	F05	S05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09	F09	S10	F10
Avg. SAT Verbal of 111-starters:	458	448	453	460	447	457	458	439	467	453	455	457
Avg. SAT Verbal 112-starters:	533	489	501	506	502	513	492	522	514	522	534	527
Avg. 112 grade of 111-starters	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.5	NA	NA	NA	2.7	2.6	2.8
111-starters with C or better in 112	69%	71%	82%	74%	82%	77%	NA	NA	NA	88%	85%	86%
Avg. 112 grade of 112-starters	2.0	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.8	2.0	2.8	2.1	2.9	2.2	3.0
112-starters with C or better in 112	66%	50%	81%	80%	76%	89%	63%	88%	73%	89%	69%	88%

Analysis: The majority of both 111 and 112 starters are doing well in English 112, signaling that we are both placing students responsibly and preparing them for the next course in the sequence.

Improvements in Place

1. We reviewed and revised the system for assessing the full portfolios in our annual assessment.
2. We continued to use optional supplemental texts in composition classes. In the fall, the supplemental texts were *Clay's Quilt* by Silas House and *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* by Z.Z. Packer. Both authors met with our composition students during the Pee Dee Fiction and Poetry Festival. In the spring, the supplemental text was *A Mind at Work* by Mike Rose. Although Rose had to cancel his visit to campus, he did answer many student questions through a DVD that he made and then sent to FMU. Kirk Boyle led our colloquium where we watched the DVD and discussed Rose's work.
3. In the fall, Amy Hogan from Pearson Publishing gave a hands-on workshop demonstrating the features of MyCompLab software which teachers and students can use with the *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*.
4. In the spring, several faculty members participated in a workshop about creating writing assignments that generate effective student writing.
5. We reviewed textbooks for English 111 and updated the recommended textbook list.
6. Through assistance from Pearson publishing, we were able to offer \$250 to the McCrimmon Award winner and three additional awards of \$50 each for the best papers in English 111, 112, and 200. We held an awards ceremony and reception to honor these outstanding writers.
7. We again worked with Pearson publishing to design *Final Draft*, our collection of student writing and guide to the Composition Program.

Planned Improvements

1. The composition coordinators will design and implement a faculty workshop about teaching students how to use the Prentice Hall Reference Guide. We hope that this workshop will give instructors some concrete ideas to use in the classroom and that, in turn, students will be more informed about how to use a handbook when writing. We hope that this workshop and more focused instruction in using the handbook will help students to be more competent in following academic conventions of spelling, grammar, and style (Program Goal A) and in using sources appropriately (Goal D).
2. The composition coordinators will collect, compile, and distribute a packet of teaching resources on teaching organization to help students be more competent in organizing their writing (Goal C).

3. In Spring 2012, the Composition Program will host a faculty workshop on multimodal composing.
4. In the fall, we will form a committee to examine new English 112 textbooks for adoption. We will focus on selecting textbooks with a more deliberate focus on argumentation and research.
5. We will host a colloquium in the Fall 2011 for our common text *Winter's Bone* by Daniel Woodrell. The author will meet to discuss the book with our students during the Pee Dee Fiction and Poetry Festival.
6. The Composition Program continues to work with Hunter Fund Committee to select books and speakers who will be of interest to our students. In the spring, Michael Shermer will be the Hunter Fund Speaker. One of his texts will be the suggested common text, and he will meet with composition students to discuss his work.
7. FWAC will work more closely with the Writing Center and Swamp Fox Writing Project to develop activities for the National Day on Writing in October 2011.

Modifications in General Education Courses

All courses covered in this report are general education courses. Thus, all modifications noted above apply to the general education program.