

Assessment Report
July 1, 2008 — June 30, 2009

PROGRAM(S) ASSESSED Writing Across the Curriculum

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YEAR 1 **of a** 1 **YEAR CYCLE**

1. ASSESSMENT MEASURES EMPLOYED

The standing assessment measures were employed: the annual survey of faculty teaching writing intensive (WI) courses, student feedback on WI courses in GE evaluations, an examination of syllabi for WI courses, and evaluations of WAC workshops. Information about writing in the major was also drawn from the outcomes assessment reports posted on the University assessment website.

2. ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Faculty responding to the survey (n = 94) were positive about the outcomes of their WI courses, both in GE and in the major. Key responses are summarized below. Likewise, student responses concerning the achievement of GE learning outcomes continue to hover around 3.0/4.0 for WI classes, suggesting that they perceive the program as accomplishing its goals. Finally, faculty assessment of writing in the major is largely positive as well.

FINDINGS from WAC surveys and WAC syllabi

Outcome 1 (improved student writing)

Responses to the faculty survey indicate that faculty see improvement in student writing in both GE courses and courses in the major.

To what extent did the writing assignments help students improve their writing abilities?

	<u>significantly</u>	<u>somewhat</u>	<u>only slightly</u>	<u>not at all</u>
GE	27.4%	48.4%	22.6%	1.6%
major	45.3%	45.3% ²	9.4%	0

Within areas or clusters of WI courses, students' responses to Question 6 of the GE Student Learning Outcomes evaluation were as follows:

The course contained writing assignments that helped improve my writing skills.

	All WI GE Courses	Area II (Non-Western Classes)	Area IV (Great Books Classes)	Area VI (College Component)
2009 Mean	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.1
2008 Mean	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0
2007 Mean	3.1	2.9	3.1	2.9

2006 Mean	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.9
2005 Mean	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.9

Outcome 2 (writing used to learn course material):

The five responses to the faculty survey indicate that these faculty believe that their students see the connection between writing assignments and the course objectives, and—more significantly—all strongly agree that these assignments actually help students learn the course material in GE courses and in the major.

To what extent did students seem to see a link between the writing assignments and the learning objectives of your WI course?

	<u>significantly</u>	<u>somewhat</u>	<u>only slightly</u>	<u>not at all</u>
GE	38.5%	50.8%	6.2%	4.6%
major	49.1%	43.4%	5.7%	1.9%

To what extent did the writing assignments help students learn the course content?

	<u>significantly</u>	<u>somewhat</u>	<u>only slightly</u>	<u>not at all</u>
GE	58.8%	38.1%	3.2%	0
major	66.7%	25.9%	3.7%	0

Within areas or clusters of WI courses, students responded to Question 5 of the GE Student Learning Outcomes evaluation form in the following way:

The course contained writing assignments that helped learn the material.

	All WI GE Courses	Area II (Non-Western classes)	Area IV (Great Books classes)	Area VI (College Component)
2009 Mean	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.3
2008 Mean	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.2
2007 Mean	3.2	3.0	3.3	3.1
2006 Mean	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.0
2005 Mean	3.1	2.9	3.2	3.0

Outcome 3 (introduction to disciplinary writing)

Responses to the faculty survey indicate that students are learning disciplinary conventions of writing.

To what extent did the writing assignments help students learn the writing conventions of the field?

	<u>significantly</u>	<u>somewhat</u>	<u>only slightly</u>	<u>not at all</u>
GE	30.9%	45.6%	22.1%	1.5%
major	50.9%	47.2%	1.9%	0

Course syllabi that include information about writing assignments indicate that disciplinary concerns are being addressed, particularly in CONH and CEHS—both “professional” colleges—where expectations for writing are often identified in grading rubrics. Syllabi from other colleges tend to provide less information about writing assignments, especially grading criteria.

Findings from University Outcomes Assessment Reports

The assessment plans of a number of academic departments include the development of students’ writing abilities as an outcome to be assessed, often by having groups of faculty evaluate portfolios or other samples of student writing. Listed below are the most recent (2007-08) assessment reports that address student writing in the major:

- Accountancy *
- African And African American Studies
- Anthropology *
- Biological Sciences
- B. S. in Business (covering multiple majors) *
- Chemistry
- Classical Humanities *
- Communication *
- Criminal Justice *
- English *
- Environmental Health Sciences
- Geological Sciences
- History *
- International Studies *
- Liberal Studies *
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Philosophy *
- Physics
- Political Science *
- Psychology *
- Religion *
- Social Work *
- Sociology
- Women’s Studies

*Assessment reports marked with an asterisk summarize the results of faculty examinations of student portfolios or other writing samples. The level of detail varies, but a most reports include the criteria by which student writing was evaluated and a tally of the findings. Particularly detailed accounts are provided in the reports by Criminal Justice and Accountancy. Most reports indicate that faculty are satisfied with the level of writing produced by their majors; those that are not indicate plans for addressing areas seen as needing attention. Full reports can be found on

the University Assessment website at <http://www.wright.edu/assessment/bpra/outcomes/reports.html>. (Note: Some departments not listed here evaluate writing outcomes in other years as part of a multi-year assessment plan.)

Workshop Evaluations

The evaluations distributed after each workshop uniformly indicate that those who attended were satisfied with the discussions that took place and the materials they received. A number of evaluations indicated that the workshop material would prove valuable in classroom practices.

3. PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

No change is planned on the basis of this assessment. The majority of the respondents to the WAC survey say that the writing assignments had a clear impact on helping their students to write better and even more respondents connect the students' writing with their learning. Likewise, departmental outcomes assessment reports suggest that writing within the major seems generally satisfactory.

The participation of the WAC faculty consultant continues to provide additional opportunities for working with faculty teaching WI courses in the major. Several comments on the survey indicate appreciation for the efforts of Peggy Lindsey in this position. A presentation reporting the results of one of her initiatives, a "boot camp" for faculty writers, has been proposed for the biannual national WAC conference in 2010.

4. ASSESSMENT PLAN COMPLIANCE

No focus groups were held with either students or faculty this year. These may be revived in 2009-10.

5. NEW ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENTS

Because of an extremely low response rate in 2006-07, the faculty survey was not distributed in 2007-08. It was reinstated this year and distributed through SurveyMonkey. The resulting number of responses (94) was more than double the rate for any previous year.