

COMPOSITION PROGRAM REPORT

2010-2011

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NEW MEXICO HIGHLANDS UNIVERSITY

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THE COMPOSITION PROGRAM MISSION

The Composition Program serves the university mission through its commitment to preparing lifelong learners. In English 100, 111, and 112, students learn that writing is a social practice and that the effectiveness of writing depends on the writer's situation, purpose, and audience. We teach the evidence-based reasoning privileged in academic contexts, and therefore emphasize that writing and reading are integrated. Our program goal is not only to improve student writing, but also to teach students to learn how to analyze and write for every new situation they encounter. In this way we aim to teach for transfer.

COMPOSITION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES FOR 2010--2011

For the 2010-2011 academic year, the Composition Program implemented and achieved the four objectives below:

1. Continue to achieve reading gains in English 100;
2. Design and implement a replacement procedure for the English 100 exit exam that provides program oversight;
3. Revise the learning objectives for English 112 and make them consistent across courses;
4. Research and identify a valid placement procedure for first-year composition courses.

OBJECTIVE 1: CONTINUE TO ACHIEVE READING GAINS IN ENGLISH 100

We have continued to administer a reading pre- and post-test in English 100 that aligns with course content and procedures. Our program goal is to see an average gain of 10% per semester. This year, as last, we exceeded that number.

English 100 Reading Exam Participants, Fall 2010	
Measure	% (Number Students)
Passing rate in course (ABC/ABCDF)	72.67 % (101/139)
Took both pre and post-test	78.42 % (109/139)
Improved on post-test	77.06 % (84/109)

English 100 Reading Exam Participants, Spring 2011	
Measure	% (Number Students)
Passing rate in course (ABC/ABCDF)	46.3% (19/41)
Took both pre and post-test	61% (25/41)
Improved on post-test	92% (23/25)

AVERAGE GAINS IN READING

English 100 Average Gain in Reading, Fall 2010		
	Number students	Mean
Pre-test	109	65.62
Post-test	109	77.14

Average gain: 11.52 %

English 100 Average Gain in Reading, Spring 2011		
	Number students	Mean
Pre-test	25	61.04
Post-test	25	74.84

Average gain: 13.8%

Unlike other measures of reading gain attempted in the past—such as the Nelson Denney and the COMPASS—the English 100 pre- and post-test is aligned with the course and therefore most students do in fact demonstrate improvement.

INCREASED FLUENCY IN SUMMARIZING: WORD COUNT

Despite consistent gains, however, some of the English 100 instructors believed that the test scores were not capturing their students' improvement on the post-test. To gather more data, I did a word count on a selection of pre- and post-test writing portions. The content of the writing portion was not assessed at all; rather, I only counted words to assess whether students were writing more on the post-test and if so, how much. I also separated the 1-6 score on the writing portion to measure improvement there.

The writing portion requires some explanation. When our history professors say our students "can't read" they are not expressing alarm at their students' performance on a standardized reading test. They mean their students are not effectively recomposing their content reading when they write essays in history. The demands of reading and writing in college are integrated, so pedagogy and assessment should be integrated, too. Separate treatment of reading and writing contradicts the recommendations of reading researchers who insist that reading and writing must be pedagogically integrated.¹ In English 100, students learn what to do with their reading through writing.

The prompt on the writing portion states: *"Thoroughly summarize the problem described in the three documents. Be sure to include main arguments and evidence from the three articles, and explain the issue as completely as possible. Write on the back of this sheet or attach additional sheets of paper if necessary."* (See the Appendix for the complete exam).

Students unfamiliar with the demands of college reading tend to initially respond to this prompt with a single paragraph. They may not take notes or annotate their reading, and they may not quote or offer evidence from the text to support the reading's main claims. They may not separate their own ideas from the authors they are being asked to represent, and they tend not to develop or create a context that will make the issues at stake in the reading intelligible to the students' own reader. Yet these aspects of reading are demanded across the academic disciplines and are routinely demonstrated and evaluated through writing. Research has

¹ See Goen and Gillotte-Tropp; Horning 3; Adler-Kassner and Estrem 37; Stahl et al. 8. For test design, see Caverly, Freebody, and the Annual Composition Program Report, 2009-2010.

consistently shown that students can improve their reading performance in college through summary writing, which is why we require it in English 100.

I gathered pre- and post-tests from four fall 2010 and two spring 2011 sections totaling 66 students. The average reading gain of this sample equaled 12.88%, which placed it between the fall average of 11.52% and the spring average of 13.8%. They show a dramatic increase in fluency:

Pre/Post Writing Portion Average Scores and Average Word Counts				
Pre-test Writing Score (1-6) Avg.	Pre-test Word Count Avg.	Post-test Writing Score (1-6) Avg.	Post-test Word Count Avg.	Word Count Difference Avg.
2.82	190	4.25	448	+258

In addition to the significant average gains seen here, 56 out of 66, or 85% of these students, wrote more on the post-test than on the pre-test. These results show that students write, on average, 258 more words on their post-test writing portion. While word count does not assess the quality of writing, in this case I suggest it indicates an increased awareness of the demands of college reading and writing.

Questions have been raised regarding the validity of the English 100 pre/post-test. In the fall I asked Dr. Chris Nelson, Professor of Special Education and chair of the Outcomes Assessment Committee and Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy Roundtable, to review and evaluate the pre/post-test. See his review in the attached document.

OBJECTIVE 2: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A REPLACEMENT FOR THE ENGLISH 100 EXIT EXAM THAT PROVIDES PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

2009-2010 PROPOSAL: REPLACE ENGLISH 100 EXIT EXAM WITH EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT ON EVERY STUDENT.

Currently, there is a committee-graded exit exam on the books for students enrolled in English 100; the Composition Committee voted to implement the following replacement procedure in fall 2010:

- During the semester, English 100 instructors regularly review student essay samples in bimonthly meetings against the Outcomes Assessment (OA) scoring criteria;
- Revise scoring criteria as needed;
- Assess every 100 student during finals week;
- Compile the data;
- Every instructor receives their section's scores, their section's mean, and the course mean to use as a basis of comparison.²

Of course, Outcomes Assessment is not a way to evaluate students or instructors, and scores on learning outcomes do not necessarily correlate to course grades. There are simply too many other factors involved in a course grade, and learning outcomes are often distributed across assignments (as they are in English 111) so that assessing one cannot capture a student's performance in a course.

However, English 100 is different in this aspect. All of the learning objectives for English 100 are aggregated in each writing assignment, and the assignments increase in difficulty and complexity as the semester progresses. In other words, even as the degree of difficulty increases, the learning outcomes and procedures remain the same. For this reason, there is a strong correlation between OA passing scores and passing grades in English 100.

² This is a practice already implemented at Louisiana State University, which won the 2009 Writing Program Award at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Louisville, KY. See Irvin Peckham's "Turning Placement into Practice" for the theory and methodology.

Because English 100 is such a contested site and we have a responsibility to prepare those students for college, we will be maintaining an ongoing conversation about learning outcomes and how to teach them, recognize them, and evaluate them in English 100. Instructors will receive feedback not as a means of instructor assessment, but to make transparent and public the importance of student learning and evaluative criteria in this course. It will also help us identify consistently effective instructors so we may adopt best practices and continually improve teaching.

A 100% correlation between passing course grades and OA scores is unrealistic, but it will be our goal as we assess English 100 every fall.

The Composition Committee voted on and unanimously approved the above proposal on April 12, 2010.

ENGLISH 100 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Intended Learning Outcome 1: *sustains a controlling idea*

This category evaluates the student's performance of sustaining focus in a four-page essay.

Intended Learning Outcome 2: *evidence supports the controlling idea*

This category evaluates the student's performance in consistently offering examples and evidence to support the purpose in a four-page essay.

ENGL 100 Assessment Procedure:

In fall 2010, each instructor submitted a sample essay from each passing student. Names were whited out and instructors assigned each essay a code representing the CRN and student number on the roster. Each course packet was then anonymously assigned to another instructor, who assessed the essays on a scale of 1-6, according to the rubric we had been using all semester.

Because essays were not graded by two readers, the English 100 OA procedure functions as oversight rather than valid outcomes assessment. It is simply too labor-intensive, at the end of a semester, to double the instructor workload when all students have to be evaluated. Some of the English 100 instructors also teach English 111, which means they are participating in two OA procedures in December.

Nonetheless, the anonymous scoring process functions as a way to achieve an objective evaluation of student performance.

English 100 Assessment Results, Fall 2010			
	Controlling Idea	Use of Evidence	Combined
Passing (scores of 7-12)	89% (59/66)	85% (34/40)	89% (117/132)
Skillful/distinctive (scores of 10-12)	42% (28/66)	48% (32/66)	45% (60/132)

Table 1

The above table indicates that 89% of English 100 student essays received passing scores on the outcome “sustains a controlling idea,” and 88% received a passing score for the outcome “use of evidence.” This is close to last year’s figures of 93% and 85%, respectively.

However, the percentage of students evaluated at the “skillful” level approximately doubled—from 25% (2009) to 42% on “controlling idea,” and from 20% to 48% on “use of evidence.”

*The data includes 7/10 sections. Not included were sections taught by Dr. Gina Briefs-Elgin and Missy Newfield.

CLOSING THE LOOP IN ENGL 100

At this point it appears that our English 100 students are achieving learning outcomes at high rates and are well-prepared for English 111.

OBJECTIVE 3: REVISE THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR ENGLISH 112 AND MAKE THEM CONSISTENT ACROSS COURSES

During English 112 Outcomes Assessment in spring 2010, Steve Weatherburn and I noticed inconsistencies across courses that needed to be addressed. We assessed the following learning outcome: “Integrate research correctly and ethically from at least eight credible sources to support a primary purpose.” While the OA results were not bad, there was a lot of variation in how instructors interpreted “correct and ethical” research. Many of them ignored the minimum source requirement because they considered it arbitrary. The rigor required

between sections also varied a great deal—students may have to find and integrate outside sources in one class, but only interpret films in the next.

At the 9/9/10 Composition Committee meeting, I shared these results and observations with faculty and we had a lively discussion on how we interpreted “correct and ethical” research. We found the term too vague to guide instructors, and one that needed to be made explicit. I took the notes from that meeting and wrote new learning objectives that broke down and defined what we meant by “correct and ethical” research; I also drafted guidelines for instructors in course design.

After the 9/9 meeting, I met individually with several faculty members to get their feedback on both the new objectives and the course guidelines, then revised accordingly. The new objectives were unanimously approved at the November 4, 2011, Composition Committee meeting. I then met with spring English 112 instructors on December 16 to issue the new learning objectives and go over the guidelines.

Previous English 112 objectives:

“By the end of ENG 112 students will:

1. Summarize, paraphrase, and quote from a complex text.
2. Recognize the distinctions between opinions, facts, and inferences.
3. Analyze and evaluate written communication in terms of situation, audience, purpose, genre, and point of view.
4. Practice writing and research processes such as drafting and revising, demonstrated in research genres such as the proposal, essay, and annotated bibliography.
5. Effectively use rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.
6. Integrate research correctly and ethically from at least eight credible sources to support a primary purpose.
7. Demonstrate mastery of academic conventions regarding essay structure, appropriate tone, formal citation, and sentence clarity.

Students enrolled in English 112 must complete a minimum of 20 final pages of academic writing to pass the course.”

New objectives approved on November 4, 2010:

“By the end of ENG 112 students will:

1. Conduct independent research in answer to a research question, using library databases and other appropriate resources.
2. Locate and integrate a variety of sources that appropriately support a primary purpose.
3. Recognize the distinctions between opinions, facts, and inferences.

4. Analyze and evaluate written communication in terms of credibility, function, situation, audience, purpose, genre, and/or point of view.
5. Practice writing and research processes such as drafting and revising, demonstrated in research genres such as the proposal, essay, and annotated bibliography.
6. Effectively use rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.
7. Demonstrate mastery of academic conventions regarding essay structure, appropriate tone, formal citation, and sentence clarity.

Students enrolled in English 112 must complete a minimum of 20 final pages of academic writing to pass the course.”

OBJECTIVE 4: RESEARCH AND IDENTIFY A VALID PLACEMENT PROCEDURE FOR FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES

CONCLUSION: HIGH SCHOOL GPA IS A VALID PLACEMENT PROCEDURE TO REPLACE THE COMPASS FOR FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION COURSES.

Here is a sample scenario: our fall 2009 passing rates were 71% in English 100 and 71% for English 111. Fifty-two percent (52%) of the class placed into and took English 111. If the students had been placed according to a minimum high school GPA of 2.75, 68%, or 202 students, would have placed into English 111 and passed the course at a rate of 78.2%. (See table below). This means that the placement procedure would have been valid and 47 more students would have placed into English 111, eliminating the need for 3 sections of English 100. This would save the university and the students considerable time and money.

High school GPA is a common placement procedure nationwide as it predicts “persistence,” or the student’s willingness to work hard, attend class, and overcome obstacles. A conversation with any of our composition instructors would reveal that it is these habits, and not a standardized test score, that are crucial to a student’s success in composition.

Background: For the past two years, I have conducted ongoing research into a valid placement procedure for first-year composition courses. The current procedure places students according to their ACT English score first; students who do not have an ACT score are placed according to their COMPASS reading score. A placement procedure is “valid” when it achieves 75% predictive validity, or when a factor will predict that a student will pass a course at least 75% of the time. Because our passing rates for English 111 do not consistently reach 75% and higher, we cannot say our placement procedure is valid. This fall and spring, for example, our passing rates for English 111 were 65% and 60%, respectively.

According to research conducted by the director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research, we have never had a correlation between COMPASS scores and passing rates in English 111. During the 2007-2008 academic year, I requested that the placement procedure be changed from the COMPASS English score to the COMPASS Reading score. This decision was made not because the reading score was valid, but because there was a significant correlation between COMPASS Reading scores and fall-to-fall retention.³ I thought at the time that until we found a valid procedure, some correlation was better than none at all.

Sample Scenario Using Fall 2009 Data:

Of 379 first-time, full-time freshmen in the fall of 2009, 356 reported ACT English scores, high school GPAs, or both.

	English 100	English 111
ACT English score of 17 OR HS GPA of 3.0	145	211
ACT English score of 16 OR HS GPA of 3.0	129	227
ACT English score of 17 OR HS GPA of 2.75	104	252
ACT English score of 16 OR HS GPA of 2.75	93	263

Of those 356 students, 299 actually took either English 100 or English 111 their first semester. The following table breaks down those students by which course they would be assigned to under a new system, which course they actually took, and whether or not they passed that course with a C or better.

³ In a report published that year on freshman retention, Jean Hill writes, “COMPASS Pre-Algebra and Writing scores are not related to fall-to-spring retention, and COMPASS Algebra and Reading scores are only moderately correlated ($p < .05$). However, the COMPASS Pre-Algebra, Algebra, and Reading scores are all strongly correlated with fall-to-fall retention ($p < .01$), while the Writing score is not correlated at all.” See “First-Time Freshmen at New Mexico Highlands University, Fall 2000 through Fall 2007: A Report Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research,” (New Mexico Highlands University, 2007), 7.

Placement Group	English 100						English 111					
	Took English 100			Took English 111			Took English 100			Took English 111		
	ABC	DFW	% ABC	ABC	DFW	% ABC	ABC	DFW	% ABC	ABC	DFW	% ABC
17/3.0	55	37	59.8%	27	22	55.1%	45	7	86.5%	85	21	80.2%
16/3.0	48	35	57.8%	20	20	50%	52	9	85.2%	92	23	80%
17/2.75	34	32	51.5%	15	16	48.4%	66	12	84.6%	97	27	78.2%
16/2.75	31	31	50%	12	15	44.4%	96	13	88.1%	100	28	78.1%

Of the 299 students who actually took English 100 or English 111 in fall 2009:

144/299 took English 100 (48%); 155/299 took English 111 (52%)

The table below redistributes those students according to the proposed new placement procedures:

Placement group	English 100		English 111	
	Number students	Percentage	Number students	Percentage
17/3.0	141	47%	158	53%
16/3.0	123	41%	176	59%
17/2.75	97	32%	202	68%
16/2.75	89	30%	210	70%

All of the proposed placement procedures would reduce the numbers of students placed into English 100, thereby saving them three credit hours and tuition; it would also save the university from staffing sections of English 100.

Our fall 2009 passing rates were 71% in English 100 and 71% for English 111. High school GPA basically predicts “persistence,” which means attendance, work ethic, and so on. If we can accurately place those students into English 111, passing rates will probably increase there. This means English 100 passing rates will probably decrease and the course will be even more difficult for instructors, but if we have fewer sections this is manageable.

COMPOSITION GRADES BY COURSE, 2010-2011

ENGLISH 100 COURSE GRADES

Placement: Students who score lower than 17 on the ACT or 80 on the COMPASS Reading exam were placed into English 100, "Reading and Writing for College."

Passing rate fall 2010: 73% (101/139)

Passing rate spring 2011: 46% (19/41)

Fall 2010 Engl 100 Grade Data		
GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL
A	25	18%
B	47	34%
C	29	21%
D	19	14%
F	19	13%
A, B, C	101/139	73%

Table 2

GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL
A	5	12%
B	5	12%
C	9	22%
D	4	10%
F	18	44%
A, B, C	19/41	46%

Table 3

ENGLISH 111 COURSE GRADES

Placement: Students who score 17 or higher on the ACT (or 80 on COMPASS Reading exam) were placed into English 111, “Freshman Composition I.”

Passing rate fall 2009: 66% (121/184)

Passing rate spring 2011: 60% (80/133)

Fall 2010 ENGL 111 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	42	23%
B	52	28%
C	27	15%
D	24	12%
F	41	22%
A, B, C	121/184	66%

Table 4

Spring 2011 ENGL 111 Grades		
GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL
A	25	19%
B	32	24%
C	23	17%
D	14	11%
F	39	29%
A, B, C	80/133	60%

Table 5

ENGLISH 112 COURSE GRADES

Placement: Students who score 28 or higher on the ACT or pass English 111 or its equivalent place into “Freshman Composition 2.”

Passing rate fall 2010: 72% (79/110)

Passing rate spring 2011: 81% (109/134)

Fall 2010 ENGL 112 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	25	23%
B	23	21%
C	31	28%
D	14	13%
F	17	15%
A, B, C	79/110	72%

Table 6

Spring 2011 ENGL 112 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	35	26%
B	40	30%
C	34	25%
D	15	11%
F	10	8%
A, B, C	109/134	81%

Table 7

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2010-2011

The Outcomes Assessment process assesses student learning as a program outcome; it is *not* designed to assess individual students or instructors.

The outcomes assessment process should be meaningful and ethical.

In order for the assessment process to generate data to improve our program, it is crucial to contextualize our goals and process. To this end, Patricia Lynne's concepts of "meaningfulness" and "ethics" in writing assessment are elaborated in the context of each course, below.

Results of outcomes assessment should "close the loop."

Outcomes assessment data, or the results of the process, should be used to make data-driven decisions that improve the program. These steps are outlined in the "Closing the Loop" sections that follow and can take several forms: faculty development; improved, more consistent standards for evaluation; curriculum reform; identifying best practices in teaching.⁴

ENGL 111 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, FALL 2010

Intended Learning Outcome: Analyze and evaluate a text in terms of situation, audience, purpose, genre, and/or point of view.

This category evaluates the student's performance of an analysis/evaluation of a text's rhetorical or generic features in relation to its purpose. We specifically focused on the relationship between claim and evidence.

⁴ This process is informed by John Biggs's concept of "constructive alignment." See his *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does*. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2003.

MEANINGFULNESS IN ENGL 111 OA

An assessment is meaningful when it is defined in relation to the needs and values of those implementing the assessment. Identifying what we want the assessment to accomplish defines need, and articulating the object, or what needs to be assessed, states our program values.⁵

What is the purpose and object of the assessment? What should it accomplish, and for whom?

Assessment of English 111 was designed to improve a specific assignment: the genre analysis essay. It is difficult to teach and to learn, and although it has improved, we are still dissatisfied with the assignment as it stands and wanted to identify best practices for teaching it. In our ongoing conversations it also became clear that English 111 instructors had very different ideas about what constituted analytical writing and appropriate uses of evidence in general. Therefore, we decided to assess how students articulate the relationship between claim and evidence in order to accomplish several ends: identify and communicate the most effective way to teach the genre analysis assignment; clarify for instructors what we mean by “analytical writing” to achieve pedagogical consistency.

To that end, I revised the analytical essay assignment during summer 2010. Context and a limited choice of topic were important factors in the assignment’s effectiveness, so Steve Weatherburn and I prepared two case studies to deepen the context for the assignment. In this way we hoped to improve the learning outcome for analytical writing (especially “use of evidence”) this year.

The significant difference in reading expectations between English 100 and English 111 was also a factor in assessing this learning outcome. In English 100, we only ask students to read for content. In English 111, we ask students to read rhetorically, and this jump is a cognitively difficult one: students must read for *how a text works* in addition to what it says, and then offer evidence of this function in writing. I also clarified this expectation for instructors and students in the new edition of the course textbook and in instructor meetings.

⁵ Patricia Lynne, *Coming to Terms: A Theory of Writing Assessment*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004, 122.

An ethical writing assessment considers the relationship between all participants and the effects and consequences of the assessment practice.⁶ Therefore, an ethical orientation foregrounds procedure, stakeholder involvement, and the assessment's effects.

Who is involved in the decision-making, and what procedure will be most inclusive?

The process of identifying the purpose and object of the assessment begins in informal discussion or instructor meetings. Specific outcomes are then voted on at a meeting of the Composition Committee. This process involves teaching assistants, instructors, and faculty. At English 111 meetings in fall 2010, we revised the rubric so that it would reflect grading in the courses and to develop a collective understanding of the assignment's demands.

Please see the Appendix for the English 111 rubric.

ENGL 111 OA Procedure:

In December 2010, we collected three random samples of the *genre analysis* assignment from each 111 instructor. An online random number generator gave us five numbers between 1 and 20—2, 3, 10, 12, and 19—and work was submitted from students occupying those places on class rosters.

- If a sample was not available for the student occupying the number on the roster, we simply moved down to the next number. (This was common in cases where students withdrew or failed).

We collected 33 random samples and blanked out the names of students and instructors. Each sample essay was read and scored twice by a pair of graders. In the rare instance when scores were more than one number apart, a third reader assigned a score to arrive at an average.

Scores were then added and a combined score of 7 was designated the lowest “passing” score. Our rationale is that there are legitimate reasons for graders to assign different scores; a 7 designates a split between a just-passing score of 4 and a just-failing score of 3.

⁶ Ibid, 130.

ENGLISH 111 OA RESULTS

English 111 OA results, fall 2009		English 111 OA results, fall 2010	
	Analyze and evaluate a text		Analyze and evaluate a text
Passing (scores of 7-12)	60% (30/50)	Passing (scores of 7-12)	79% (26/33)
Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	10% (5/50)	Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	18% (6/33)
*Random sample of all sections		*Random sample of all sections except Dr. Kempner's: 9/11.	

The OA results show significant improvement: the number of passing students increased 19% (from 60 to 79) and the percentage judged “skillful” almost doubled, from 10 to 18%. As a reader, I noticed a consistency across sections in the kind of intellectual task assigned that was badly needed.

CLOSING THE LOOP IN ENGL 111

A goal of 80% passing is a reasonable one, and one we almost achieved this year. However, the next Director of Composition should set future goals.

ENGL 112 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, SPRING 2010

Intended Learning Outcome: Integrates a number and variety of sources to support a primary purpose

This category evaluates the student's performance of integrating outside sources in academic writing.

MEANINGFULNESS IN ENGL 112 OA

An assessment is meaningful when it is defined in relation to the needs and values of those implementing the assessment. Identifying what we want the assessment to accomplish defines need, and articulating the object, or what needs to be assessed, states our program values.⁷

What is the purpose and object of the assessment? What should it accomplish, and for whom?

We chose to focus on the outcome "integrating research" in order to test the degree to which we achieved some consistency in teaching this new outcome. (See the previous section regarding new English 112 objectives).

ETHICS IN ENGL 112 OA

An ethical writing assessment considers the relationship between all participants and the effects and consequences of the assessment practice.⁸ Therefore, an ethical orientation foregrounds procedure, stakeholder involvement, and the assessment's effects.

Who is involved in the decision-making, and what procedure will be most inclusive?

We had two meetings in May 2011 wherein English 112 instructors revised the previous year's rubric. We all read a sample of student writing, and assigned the essay a score of 1-6, based on its performance of integrating sources. We then collaboratively wrote the criteria defining each score, with an eye toward describing how we recognized the learning outcome in

⁷ Patricia Lynne, *Coming to Terms: A Theory of Writing Assessment*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004, 122.

⁸ Ibid, 130.

writing. In this way all instructors who evaluate students had a say in how the learning outcome is assessed at the program level.

ENGL 112 OA Procedure:

In May 2011, we collected three random samples of the final research essay from each 112 section. An online random number generator gave us three numbers between 1 and 20—5, 7, and 14—and work was submitted for students occupying those places on class rosters.

- If a sample was not available for the student occupying the number on the roster, we simply moved down to the next number. (This was common in cases where students withdrew or failed).
- For classes with enrollments of fewer than 15 students, we selected only students in positions 5 and 7.

We collected 21 random samples and blanked out the names of students and instructors. Each sample essay was read and scored twice by a pair of graders. In the rare instance when scores were more than one number apart, a third reader assigned a score to arrive at an average.

Scores were then added and a combined score of 7 was designated the lowest “passing” score. Our rationale is that there are legitimate reasons for graders to assign different scores; a 7 designates a split between a just-passing score of 4 and a just-failing score of 3.

Although our results show significant improvement over last year, we were only able to obtain 11 sample essays scored by two graders. One instructor did not submit his results and as he taught two sections, he was assigned a disproportionately large number of essays. This invalidated the work of his scoring partner and decreased our sample size.

ENGLISH 112 OA RESULTS

English 112 OA results, spring 2010		English 112 OA results, spring 2011	
	<i>Integrates research correctly and ethically to support a primary purpose</i>		<i>Integrates a number and variety of sources to support a primary purpose</i>
Passing (scores of 7-12)	76% (25/33)	Passing (scores of 7-12)	100% (11/11)
Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	3% (1/33)	Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	27% (3/11)

While the small sample size is disappointing, the results show marked improvement; it is remarkable that this year 3 out of 11 students received “distinctive” scores.

CLOSING THE LOOP IN ENGL 112

The next Director of Composition should set future goals.

COMPOSITION PROGRAM COURSE OBJECTIVES⁹

By the end of ENGL 100, students will:

1. Communicate an ability to read texts strategically;
2. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between ideas in a text and relationships between texts;
3. Communicate an ability to synthesize information/ideas in and between readings, social experience, and the world;
4. Compose an essay that responds accurately to the writing situation and sustains a controlling idea;
5. Select and use textual, cultural, and/or personal evidence as primary research to support the controlling ideas in their writing;
6. Maintain focus by organizing paragraphs that are tied to the essay's controlling idea;
7. Demonstrate improved grammar and mechanics such as usage, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization.
8. Complete a minimum of 12 final pages of academic writing.

By the end of ENGL 111 students will:

1. Summarize, paraphrase, and quote from a complex text.
2. Recognize the distinctions between opinions, facts, and inferences.
3. Analyze and evaluate written communication in terms of situation, audience, purpose, genre, and point of view.
4. Express a primary purpose in a thesis statement and organize supporting evidence from a variety of sources.
5. Practice writing and speaking processes such as planning, collaborating, organizing, composing, revising, and editing, in print and electronic genres.
6. Demonstrate academic conventions regarding essay structure, appropriate tone, formal citation, and sentence clarity.
7. Complete a minimum of 16 final pages of academic writing.

⁹ These objectives were developed by reconciling faculty values, student needs, the New Mexico State Competencies, and the Writing Program Administrators' Council Position Statement on First-Year Outcomes. They were revised and approved by English faculty in April 2009.

By the end of ENG 112 students will:

1. Conduct independent research in answer to a research question, using library databases and other appropriate resources.
2. Locate and integrate a variety of sources that appropriately support a primary purpose.
3. Recognize the distinctions between opinions, facts, and inferences.
4. Analyze and evaluate written communication in terms of credibility, function, situation, audience, purpose, genre, and/or point of view.
5. Practice writing and research processes such as drafting and revising, demonstrated in research genres such as the proposal, essay, and annotated bibliography.
6. Effectively use rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.
7. Demonstrate mastery of academic conventions regarding essay structure, appropriate tone, formal citation, and sentence clarity.
8. Complete a minimum of 20 final pages of academic writing to pass the course.

Part 1.

Study time. About how much time, total, did you spend studying for this exam?

Study strategies. Please read the statements below and check off each one that you performed as a study strategy.

- I annotated, or wrote on, my case study.
- I created examples or analogies to better understand the case study.
- I made connections between two or more concepts.
- I wrote down or reflected on my prior knowledge of the topic before reading.
- I created “why” questions before, during, or after reading.
- I organized the information I read in some way.
- I summarized sections of the reading so I would understand it better.
- I made up questions and answers.
- I worked with a classmate on one or more of the above strategies.
- I studied in these other ways that work for me:

Part 2: *True/False.* (40%)

Instructions: Your answers below should only pertain to the readings, not your personal experience or something you have read before.

Read the statements below and clearly mark each one T for “true” or F for “false.” A statement is “true” if the same information can be found in or supported by any of the three articles.

1. In the U.S., all states are required to perform background checks on child care workers and regulate day care centers to protect children.
2. More and more, Canadians view child care as the parents’ responsibility alone.
3. Some Canadian families pay \$70/month for childcare that costs \$800-1200/month in the northeastern United States.
4. Due to the recession, the French government has recently cut medical, retirement, and child care benefits.

5. _____ Whereas understaffed day care centers deal harshly with children's behavior issues, fully and professionally staffed centers do not react more appropriately.
6. _____ Although it requires government investment, research shows that quality early child care can have beneficial long-term effects for the individual child and the national economy.
7. _____ There are more child care workers per child in American day cares than in French day cares.
8. _____ The French generally trust the government to meet their child care needs, while Americans are more likely to trust community and corporate solutions.

Instructions: Choose **two** of the statements below. Mark the statements you choose T for "true" or F for "false," and give one reason from the reading **or** your own experience to support your decision. Write on the back of this sheet if you need to.

1. ____ It is important that the American government stay out of early child development.

This statement is true/false, because:

2. ____ College graduates would have more career options if the American government invested in affordable, quality early child care.

This statement is true/false, because:

3. ____ Government-subsidized day care may work in Canada and France, but it would never work in the U.S..

This statement is true/false, because:

Part 3: *Summary*. (60%)

Instructions: Thoroughly summarize the problem described in the three documents. Be sure to include main arguments and evidence from the three articles, and explain the issue as completely as possible. Write on the back of this sheet or attach additional sheets of paper if necessary.

ENGLISH 100 READING EXAM RUBRIC, WRITING PORTION

1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>May be opinion only; may be too brief to evaluate; topic may be irrelevant to the reading</p>	<p>May be too brief to evaluate; coverage may be scant (such as only treating first document)</p>	<p>Quality and/or cost may not be addressed; may note ideas but not offer evidence (or vice versa); implications may not be addressed at all; coverage may be too short (briefly treats 2 documents)</p>	<p>Includes evidence/examples of quality and cost; mentions implications, however tangentially; may note distinctions between cultural perspectives or worldviews; logically connects or synthesizes all 3 documents</p> <p>opinion may be present but doesn't detract from content</p>	<p>Thoroughly addresses quality and cost as defining features of child care; clearly establishes relationship between ideas and evidence given for them; communicates social, national, or economic implications; responds to documents as arguments; logically connects or synthesizes all 3 documents</p> <p>opinion may be present but doesn't detract from content</p>	<p>Presents child care as a social, national, or economic issue; coverage of issue is thorough; responds to documents as arguments; synthesizes all 3 documents</p> <p>opinion may be present but doesn't detract from content</p>

ENGLISH 100 EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

	Scoring Criteria					
Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6
sustains a controlling idea (focus)	May be: too brief to demonstrate control; incoherent at the sentence level; No evident controlling idea	Ideas may contradict each other; may summarize ideas from case study without stating their own	If under 3.5 pages, may be too brief to demonstrate control or focus Implied main idea but sentence-level clarity, organization, or structure make it unclear; idea may lack context; may only respond to situation, not arguments;	Single controlling idea runs throughout but may be unclear in places; responds to arguments about the issue; incorporates most sources	Single controlling idea runs clearly throughout; synthesizes and negotiates other arguments and ideas about the issue; incorporates all sources; thesis mirrors controlling idea	Single controlling idea runs clearly throughout and is stated in thesis; consistently synthesizes and smoothly negotiates other ideas; idea may be sophisticated or original to the case study; incorporates all sources
evidence supports the controlling idea (development)	No evidence; evidence completely unrelated to topic	Idea is not strong or evident enough to evaluate or link to evidence; may be opinion with no explicit textual reference	If under 3.5 pages, may be too brief to demonstrate development Limited or inconsistent use of evidence; evidence may be not relevant or off-topic; idea may be too weak to support evidence;	Supporting evidence is relevant and relates to topic but may be weakly linked to ideas or ideas may be unclear; context may be unclear	Ideas are supported with relevant evidence; student creates context for evidence	All ideas are supported with relevant evidence; student creates rich and clear context for evidence; use of evidence is highly sophisticated or integrated

ENGLISH 111 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

English 111 Outcomes Assessment Criteria, Fall 2010						
Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6
Analyze and evaluate a text in terms of situation, audience, purpose, genre, and/or point of view (development)	No apparent attempt at analysis or evaluation	May only make claims of opinion with no evidence	Claims may be present but evidence is unclear, inappropriate or not relevant; does not analyze how a text works; addresses text at level of content only; if under 3.5 pages, may be too brief to demonstrate sustained analysis	Clearly attempts to analyze how a text works; claim and evidence are consistently present, but relationship may be only implied, confusing to reader, or inconsistent; evidence may be inappropriate or irrelevant; may not evaluate	Analyzes how a text works; claims and evidence are explicitly linked and consistently present, but relationship may not be consistently addressed in depth; evaluation may be cursory	Analyzes how a text works; Logical connections between claims and evidence are consistent, clear, and explicit; use of evidence is highly sophisticated or integrated; evaluates text's effectiveness

ENGLISH 112 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

English 112 Outcomes Assessment Criteria, Spring 2011						
Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6
Integrates a number and variety of sources to support a primary purpose	No evident / explicit use of sources.	Consistent plagiarism of sources; no attempt to integrate; too brief to evaluate.	Sources are largely patchwritten: large passages look plagiarized or half paraphrase/half-quote, or copied and pasted; dropped quotes seem random, out of context, etc.; it's difficult or impossible to identify sources; essay may not be long enough to demonstrate control of sources.	Identifying sources or their purpose may require work; framing may not be logically and conventionally consistent; sources usually used appropriately; sources may not serve a variety of functions. May include dropped quotes, but they are in context.	Sources integrated and synthesized, but clarity may be inconsistent; sources support a general purpose. <i>Summary, paraphrase, and quotes all responsibly represent the source; sources are framed logically and conventionally; clearly distinguishes between voices with signal phrases and punctuation.</i>	Sophisticated and consistent synthesis and integration of sources at the essay and paragraph levels; sources are tightly connected to the thesis. <i>Same as italicized content of 5.</i>

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