

COMPOSITION PROGRAM REPORT

2009-2010

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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.

The Composition Program demonstrates its commitment to teaching excellence and individualized attention by maintaining a culture of ongoing inquiry, training, and support for teaching assistants and instructors. In addition to staying current on research in effective course design for Highlands' unique student population, the program's instructors and administrators continually research and share effective methods of mentoring and collaborative learning, so the informal relationships so crucial to learning are also nurtured.

COMPOSITION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES FOR 2009-2010

For the 2009-2010 academic year, the Composition Program implemented and achieved the three objectives below:

1. Implement a course-specific reading pre- and post-test for English 100;
2. Improve student reading comprehension in English 100;
3. Design a replacement for the English 100 exit exam that provides program oversight.

OBJECTIVE 1: IMPLEMENT A READING PRE- AND POST-TEST FOR ENGL 100

PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT PRE- AND POST-TESTING IN ENGL 100

Our use of standardized pre- and post-tests such as the Nelson-Denney and the COMPASS yields no valid data for many reasons:

1. Few students actually take the post-test;
2. Few students actually try to do well on the post-test;
3. Post-test scores are as likely to decline as increase, indicating randomness;
4. Post-test scores are unrelated to success in ENGL 100;
5. *Standardized tests do not assess student performance of the content and procedures of the course.*

The only caveat to #4 above is that students succeeding in ENGL 100 are more likely to take the post-test in the first place. However, their score on the test is unrelated to their grade in the course. This indicates motivation: almost all of the students who took the post-test in spring 2008 passed the course, even though their post-test score may have been lower than their pre-test. (For a complete analysis see the spring 2008 composition report).

DEVELOPMENTAL READING OUTCOMES COMMITTEE

Background: In spring 2009, we established a study group called the Developmental Reading Outcomes Committee (DROC) to design a reading pre- and post-test for ENGL 100 that would align learning outcomes, classroom practice, and assessment.

DROC Objectives:

1. Identify our Engl 100 students' most significant reading comprehension problems.
2. Create reading outcomes for Engl 100.
3. Research the most appropriate model for a pre/post-test that would assess reading improvement in Engl 100.

DROC members:

- Dr. Holly Middleton, Director of Composition, Chair
- Dr. Gina Briefs-Elgin, Writing Center Director
- Dr. Donna Woodford, Professor of English Literature
- Stephen Weatherburn, Assistant Director of Composition
- Juan Gallegos, a graduate student writing an M.A. thesis on developmental reading and writing

It should be noted that all committee members also regularly teach English 100.

Procedure:

DROC met every other Wednesday during the spring 2009 semester, and members gave their attention to the objectives #1 and #2 stated above. Using Alice Horning's heuristic in "Reading Across the Curriculum as the Key to Student Success," we first identified our students' main reading comprehension problems and then wrote teachable and measurable outcomes to address them. As chair, I then completed objective #3: I conducted extensive research in developmental studies for the most appropriate pre- and post-test to assess improvement on the outcomes we drafted.¹

In April, the committee achieved its objectives and made the recommendations below; faculty approved them in August 2009.

¹ For the model we are using, see David Caverly's work in the bibliography.

ENGLISH 100 READING OBJECTIVES

1. Communicate an ability to read texts strategically.
2. Recognize relationships between ideas in a text and relationships between texts
3. Make connections between readings, social experience, and the world.

There is no way to teach or assess “general reading ability.” However, by focusing on relationships and connections, we have identified a feature of college-level reading that many of our students find difficult at both the syntactic and the conceptual levels.

The new English 100 curriculum is organized by case studies, and students are required to read intertextually to articulate and solve a problem. They then write a four-page essay that incorporates textual evidence in support of their proposed solution.

By requiring textual evidence to support their ideas in writing, the course foregrounds the role of “text-user”: “users who can employ the texts in specific circumstances for specific purposes.”² We have privileged this reader’s role in English 100, because many of our students are unfamiliar with how texts are materially used in academic settings. It will also give students valuable experience in evidence-based reasoning and writing.

Pre- and post-test:

Students were given a case study on the topic “Curfews for Teens” that included three articles elaborating a position on the laws’ effectiveness and constitutionality. The same test over the same material, the same instructions, and the same grading protocol were administered as the final exam. For both tests, students took the case study home and studied it outside of class. The test itself was open-book: students were allowed to consult their readings and their notes.

Please see the Appendix for the actual test.

Test and grading procedure:

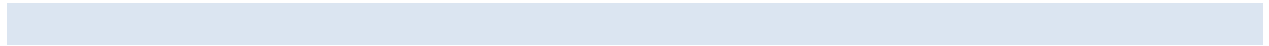
Students took the readings home the second class meeting, took the test in class the third class meeting, and got their scores with feedback on the fourth. All students were given 75 in-class minutes to complete the pre- and post-test.

² See Peter Freebody, “A Socio-Cultural Approach: Resourcing Four Roles as a Literacy Learner,” *Prevention of Reading Failure*, ed. Alan Watson and Anne Badenhop. Lindfield, NSW: Scholastic Australia, 1992. <http://www.myread.org/readings/freebody.htm>; and Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem, “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: A View from the Field,” *The Outcomes Book: Debate and Consensus after the WPA Outcomes Statement*, eds. Susanmarie Harrington, Keith Rhodes, Ruth Overman Fischer, and Rita Malenczyk. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005, 65.

Instructors made up their own four-digit code to substitute for the CRN, and a two-digit student code corresponding to a student's position on the class roster. All instructors submitted their coded test packets to the English office, and picked up others to grade. In this way every test had a six-digit code indicating the class and student, and all grading was anonymous. Instructors received their graded tests back within one week.

Evaluative criteria:

In August 2009, all English 100 instructors took the test themselves, and then we met to collaborate on a rubric to assess the writing portion of the test. Because we were evaluating student writing for reading comprehension, we had to reach some consensus on how we would recognize achievement of the reading outcomes in writing. (Please see rubric in the Appendix).



OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH 100

READING EXAM RESULTS

The tables below demonstrate the results of our reading pre- and post-test.

English 100 Reading Exam Results, Fall 2009	
Measure	% (Number Students)
Passing rate in course (ABC/ABCDF)	72% (120/167)
Took both pre and post-test	75% (125/167)
Improved on post-test	84% (105/125)

English 100 Reading Exam Results, Spring 2010	
Measure	% (Number Students)
Passing rate in course (ABC/ABCDF)	63% (29/46)
Took both pre and post-test	75% (33/46)
Improved on post-test	79% (26/33)

The above tables indicate that this test addressed two of the problems of previous testing methods: low compliance rates and lack of improvement. Here, almost all students who

passed the class took both tests so we have a large data pool; most students also improved on the post-test.

AVERAGE GAINS IN READING

English 100 Average Gain in Reading, Fall 2009		
	Number students	Mean
Pre-test	125	57.68
Post-test	125	70.46

Average gain: 12.78%³

English 100 Average Gain in Reading, Spring 2010		
	Number students	Mean
Pre-test	33	56.27
Post-test	33	69.55

Average gain: 13.28%

³ Post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test ($p < .000$). Thanks to Jean Hill were running the data.

The above tables indicate statistically significant improvement in reading across courses. There is also a strong negative correlation between pre-test scores and gain, which means students who scored lowest on the pre-test improved the most.

For the spring 2010 reading exam, students were given a completely different test: whereas fall's case study was about curfews for teens, the spring case study treated the topic of low-wage jobs for teens. It is remarkable just how close the pre-test and post-test means are, despite the difference in test content. However, the procedures and format of the test were exactly the same, and I attempted to ensure that they were at the same level of syntactic and conceptual difficulty.

Because the course and its corresponding test have proven to effectively teach and assess reading improvement, we will be continuing this testing procedure next year.

OBJECTIVE 3: DESIGN A REPLACEMENT FOR THE ENGLISH 100 EXIT EXAM THAT PROVIDES PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

PROPOSAL: REPLACE ENGLISH 100 EXIT EXAM WITH OUTCOMES 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 fall semester, English 100 instructors regularly review student essay samples in bimonthly meetings against the Outcomes Assessment (OA) scoring criteria;
- Revise OA scoring criteria as needed;
- Do OA on every 100 student during finals week;
- Compile the data;

- Every instructor receives their section's OA scores, their section's mean, and the course mean to use as a basis of comparison.⁴

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. (If you refer to Engl 100 OA in this report, you will see that 89% of our passing English 100 students achieved passing scores on OA).

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.

⁴ 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.

COMPOSITION GRADES BY COURSE, 2009-2010

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 2009: **71% (120/168)**

Passing rate spring 2010: **63% (29/46)**

Fall 2009 ENGL 100 Grade and Absence Data			
GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL	AVG NUMBER ABSENCES
A	47	28%	1.4
B	49	29%	3.5
C	24	14%	6.7
D	20	12%	9.1
F	28	17%	16
A, B, C	120/168	71%	3.38

Table 1

Spring 2010 ENGL 100 Grade and Absence Data			
GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL	AVG NUMBER ABSENCES
A	7	15%	*
B	8	17%	*
C	14	30%	*
D	4	9%	*
F	13	28%	*
A, B, C	29/46	62%	5.58

Table 2

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: **71% (157/221)**

Passing rate spring 2010: **65% (93/142)**

Fall 2009 ENGL 111 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	59	27%
B	57	26%
C	41	19%
D	18	8%
F	46	20%
A, B, C	157/221	71%

Table 3

Spring 2010 ENGL 111 Grades		
GRADE	# OF STUDENTS	% OF TOTAL
A	31	22%
B	36	25%
C	26	18%
D	11	8%
F	38	27%
A, B, C	93/142	65%

Table 4

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 2009: 78% (83/106)

Passing rate spring 2010: 75% (118/157)

Fall 2009 ENGL 112 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	32	30%
B	32	30%
C	19	18%
D	12	11%
F	11	11%
A, B, C	83/106	78%

Table 5

Spring 2010 ENGL 112 Grades		
Grade	# of students	% of total
A	43	28%
B	24	16%
C	34	22%
D	22	15%
F	28	19%
A, B, C	101/151	67%

Table 6

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2009-2010

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.⁵

ENGL 100 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, FALL 2009

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.

⁵ 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 100 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.⁶

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

During the past two years, we have worked to create reading and writing outcomes for English 100 that served our students' needs and met our program goals. Fall 2009 was the first time our new English 100 curriculum was implemented and taught across all sections. Therefore, the primary purpose of assessment was to evaluate the curriculum and make any necessary revisions.

We selected the above two outcomes because, although Engl 100 has seven learning outcomes, "controlling idea," (or what we also call "focus" and "coherence") and "use of evidence" are primary features of evidence-based reasoning. The use of evidence also demonstrates strategic reading and comprehension, so we can reinforce the interrelatedness of academic reading and writing.

Our goal was to accomplish a high percentage of "passing" outcomes so that Engl 100 students would be best prepared for English 111.

ETHICS IN ENGL 100 OA

An ethical writing assessment considers the relationship between all participants and the effects and consequences of the assessment practice.⁷ 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 Composition Committee voted to assess the above outcomes, and all English 100 instructors defined the scoring criteria in a December 2009 meeting. We read over several samples of student writing, assigned them scores of 1-6, then collaboratively wrote the criteria

⁶ Patricia Lynne, *Coming to Terms: A Theory of Writing Assessment*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004, 122.

⁷ Ibid, 130.

defining each score, with an eye toward describing how we recognized the learning outcome in writing. In this way all instructors who evaluate students had a say in how the learning outcome is assessed at the program level.

Please see the Appendix for the English 100 OA rubric.

ENGL 100 OA Procedure:

In fall 2009, we collected random essay samples from each 100 instructor. Because we wanted a large sample size, instructors submitted the work of students occupying odd-numbered positions on class rosters. In some cases, essay samples did not represent advanced work and were disqualified; students who received course grades of D/F/W were also not assessed.

We ended up with 40 sample essays and blanked out the names of students and instructors. Each sample essay was read and scored twice by a pair of graders who were assigned packets of 16-20 essays.⁸ 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 whereupon one reader assigned a just-failing score of 3 and the other assigned a just-passing score of 4.

⁸ OA participants: Ben Villarreal, Mimi McDonald, Juan Gallegos, Beth Devore, Steve Weatherburn, and Holly Middleton.

ENGLISH 100 OA RESULTS

English 100 OA Results, Fall 2009			
	Controlling Idea	Use of Evidence	Combined
Passing (scores of 7-12)	93% (37/40)	85% (34/40)	89% (71/80)
Skillful/distinctive (scores of 10-12)	25% (10/40)	20% (8/40)	23% (18/80)

Table 7

The above table indicates that 93% of the sample essays received passing scores on the outcome “sustains a controlling idea,” and 85% received a passing score for the outcome “use of evidence.” Most impressive and surprising to us was the high percentage of essays receiving a “distinctive” combined score of 10-12: approximately one fourth of the sample performed at this level.

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.

Because the above two outcomes are so important to success in the course and highly correlated to course grades, we have decided to assess these every fall. (Another outcome may be added, but these two will remain constant).

Due to staffing shortages and turnover, our fall 2010 English 100 instructors will include TAs teaching their second semester. This is a departure from our policy of only assigning experienced and effective instructors to English 100. However, it is a staffing reality that means our OA results may be quite different next year. We can keep objectives and curriculum fairly constant; instructors vary.

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.

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.⁹

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 spring 2009 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.

ETHICS IN ENGL 111 OA

An ethical writing assessment considers the relationship between all participants and the effects and consequences of the assessment practice.¹⁰ Therefore, an ethical orientation foregrounds procedure, stakeholder involvement, and the assessment's effects.

⁹ Patricia Lynne, *Coming to Terms: A Theory of Writing Assessment*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2004, 122.

¹⁰ Ibid, 130.

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.

Unlike the Engl 100 and 112 assessments, for English 111 Steve Weatherburn and I collaboratively wrote the criteria for how we recognize “use of evidence” on a 1-6 scale; therefore, we limited instructor involvement at this stage. This was done for three reasons: there was such little consensus that we felt the need to define the initial program criteria; our beginning teachers are concentrated in English 111 and therefore require more explicit guidance; and in this case involvement would have required an additional very long meeting.

Please see the Appendix for the English 111 rubric.

ENGL 111 OA Procedure:

In January 2010, we collected five 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.

- For instructors teaching more than one section, we only collected samples from the first section listed on the online course schedule.
- 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 19 students, we selected the student in position #1.

We collected 50 random samples and blanked out the names of students and instructors. Each sample essay was read and scored twice by a pair of graders.¹¹ In the rare instance when scores were more than one number apart, a third reader assigned a score to arrive at an average.

¹¹ OA participants: Ben Villarreal, Geoff Kenmuir, Missy Newfield, Mimi McDonald, Holly Middleton, Casey Francis, Beth Devore, Benton Fazzolari, Steve Weatherburn, and Cameron Summers.

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.

ENGLISH 111 OA RESULTS

English 111 OA Results, Fall 2009	
	Analyze and Evaluate a Text
Passing (scores of 7-12)	60% (30/50)
Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	10% (5/50)

CLOSING THE LOOP IN ENGL 111

The outcomes above are not far from what we expected. We did gain valuable insight from the process, however, as we were able to identify an instructor whose students performed at consistently high levels. We contacted this instructor and asked for her assignment sequence; I also compiled feedback from other effective instructors and prepared a sheet of guidelines for teaching the genre analysis. We then shared these results with all English 111 instructors in our regular meeting before they began teaching the assignment in spring 2010. In this way, instructors were able to teach the assignment in the way that had been proven most effective for our students.

We are currently revising this assignment in the English 111 course textbook, *Communities of Discourse*. Context and a limited choice of topic were important factors in the assignment’s effectiveness, so Steve Weatherburn and I are preparing two case studies to deepen the context for the assignment. In this way we hope to improve the learning outcome for analytical writing (especially “use of evidence”) next 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. We are also clarifying this expectation for instructors and students in next year's edition of the course textbook.

ENGL 112 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT, SPRING 2010

Intended Learning Outcome: Integrates research correctly and ethically

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.¹²

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 ascertain how it is taught across sections and try to achieve some consistency for fall 2010. Because our attention has been directed to English 100, 111, and teacher training over the past three years, we have not had a sense of urgency regarding English 112. It is also a course taught by instructors with at least a year—and usually more—teaching experience, many of them tenured faculty.

There has been informal discussion about our general dissatisfaction with student achievement of this outcome, however, so we decided to assess it this spring in order to start an informed discussion with the Composition Committee this fall.

¹² 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.¹³ 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 Composition Committee voted to assess the above outcome, and English 112 instructors defined the criteria in a May 4, 2010 meeting.¹⁴ 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 writing. In this way all instructors who evaluate students had a say in how the learning outcome is assessed at the program level.

Please see the Appendix for the English 112 OA rubric.

ENGL 112 OA Procedure:

In May 2010, 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—2, 3, and 13—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 19 students, we selected the student in position #1.

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.¹⁵ In the rare instance when scores were more than one number apart, a third reader assigned a score to arrive at an average.

¹³ Ibid, 130.

¹⁴ All instructors were invited to and informed of the meeting; all attended except Missy Newfield and Will Brown.

¹⁵ OA participants: Juan Gallegos, Morgan Chesbro, Mimi McDonald, Eddie Tafoya, Missy Newfield, Holly Middleton, Ben Villarreal, and Will Brown.

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.

ENGLISH 112 OA RESULTS

English 112 OA Results, Spring 2010	
	Integrates research correctly and ethically to support a primary purpose
Passing (scores of 7-12)	76% (25/33)
Skillful/Distinctive (scores of 10-12)	3% (1/33)

While only one student essay earned a “distinctive” score on this particular writing feature, twenty-five of the thirty-three samples passed. This was higher than expected, given the general lack of emphasis on English 112 during teacher training as we concentrated on English 100 and 111.

CLOSING THE LOOP IN ENGL 112

The most significant thing we learned during Outcomes Assessment is that there is great variation in the kind of research and assignments across 112 courses. Most are achieving the outcome, but there is a great range in the level of difficulty and how instructors interpret “correct” and “ethical” integration of sources. This became clear at our meeting to develop the criteria—for some instructors, synthesizing sources into a conversation is enough. For others, evaluating the source and its purpose is an important part of the intellectual work of the course.

At an early Composition Committee meeting in fall 2010, we will revisit the 112 course objectives and clarify expectations for the use and purpose of research. This will give us time to schedule training for the new 112 instructors that begin teaching the course in spring 2011.

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.

¹⁶ 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 ENGL 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.
8. Complete a minimum of 20 final pages of academic writing.

ENGLISH 100 READING PRE- AND POST-TEST

Number: _____

Grade: _____

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: Read the statements below and clearly mark each one T for “true” or F for “false.” The statement may be information stated in the text itself or an idea supported by the text.

1. ___ Arguments against curfew laws include: they target minority kids; they worsen relations between minority kids and the police; they are a bad use of police resources.
2. ___ Curfew laws are sometimes challenged on the basis that many teenagers end up being charged as adults.
3. ___ Many citizens support curfew laws because they believe they keep children and teenagers safe from street crime.
4. ___ Curfew laws in Chicago resulted in a 42% decrease in juvenile murder offenders between the first halves of 1994 and 1995.

5. ____ Opponents of curfew laws believe they punish people for crimes they haven't committed.
6. ____ San Jose Police Chief Louis Cobarruviaz believes that it's just as important to enforce curfew laws in neighborhoods with low crime rates as those with high crime rates.
7. ____ Beth Frerking believes that it's worth it to limit constitutional rights if it might keep children and teens safe.
8. ____ The ACLU would probably support curfew laws if they lowered the crime rate.

Instructions: Mark the statements below T for "true" or F for "false." Then choose **two** of the statements, 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. ____ A curfew law is like a bandage on a broken arm: it doesn't really treat the underlying, larger problem.
This statement is true/false, because:
2. ____ Laws designed to keep people safe often only end up treating innocent people like criminals.
This statement is true/false, because:
3. ____ Philosophical arguments over whether a law is right or wrong often ignore how a law hurts or helps people in their everyday lives.
This statement is true/false, because:
4. ____ Curfew laws would be good for Las Vegas, because if local teens are on the streets after hours, they are usually getting into trouble.
This statement is true/false, because:

Part 3: *Short essay.* (60%)

Instructions: Write a short essay summarizing the problem described in the case study and supporting documents. Be sure to include main arguments and evidence, and explain the issue as completely as possible. Attach additional sheets of paper if necessary.

Part 4. *Prediction.* What grade do you predict you will earn on this exam, and why?

ENGLISH 100 READING EXAM RUBRIC, WRITING PORTION

Feature	1	2	3	4	5	6
Summarizes problem by synthesizing relationships between info/ideas between documents						
Identifies arguments and evidence regarding curfews from all 3 documents						
Demonstrates awareness of distinction between claims and evidence						

Unlike OA rubrics, we did not define the meaning of each individual score. This was in part because although we discussed the criteria thoroughly over several meetings, we wanted to keep it open as we were looking for reading comprehension. We also wanted to leave space for commentary because these sheets were returned to instructors with their graded exams.

ENGLISH 100 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

English 100 Outcomes Assessment Criteria: Fall 2009						
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	Implied main idea but sentence-level clarity, organization, or structure make it unclear; idea may lack context; too brief	Single controlling idea runs throughout but may be unclear in places; reader may have to stop and make connections	Single controlling idea runs clearly throughout; synthesizes and negotiates other ideas	Single controlling idea runs clearly throughout; consistently synthesizes and smoothly negotiates other ideas
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 support	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; context is fairly clear	All ideas are supported with relevant evidence; context is clear; use of evidence is highly sophisticated or integrated

ENGLISH 111 OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

English 111 Outcomes Assessment Criteria, Fall 2009						
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	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 2010						
Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6
Integrates research correctly and ethically to support a primary purpose	No evident / explicit use of sources.	Consistent plagiarism of sources; no attempt to integrate; too brief to evaluate: fewer than ~5 pages.	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: fewer than 7 pages.	Sources identified but may require inference; framing may not be logically and conventionally consistent; sources usually used appropriately; sources may be compartmentalized rather than synthesized. May include dropped quotes, but they are in context; writer sustains control of sources through page length of ~7 pages.	Sources synthesized, but clarity may be inconsistent; logical relationship between source and claim; summary, paraphrase, and quotes all responsibly represent the source; sources are framed logically and conventionally; clearly distinguishes between voices with signal phrases and punctuation; writer demonstrates control of sources through page length of ~8 pages.	Sources are synthesized and support primary purpose; relationship between source and claim is clear and consistent; summary, paraphrase, and quotes all accurately represent the source; sources are framed logically and conventionally; clearly distinguishes between voices with signal phrases and punctuation; writer demonstrates control of sources through page length of ~8 pages.

***Note: "Framing" designates the act of introducing a source, integrating the source, and interpreting it. It is both logical, an act of reasoning, and conventional, a way to signal the reader in writing.**

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