

**Writing Assessment
Summary Report
2002-2003**

Assessment Method I – The Writing Assessment Form

Writing Assessment Form and Scoring

The Writing Assessment Form was used to assess student written work submitted as part of culmination courses in the undergraduate programs. The form is a twelve-item measure that allows the reader to rate the written piece on various dimensions. The rating system uses five points ranging from 5 (exceptional) to 1 (inadequate).

The scores for each Writing Assessment Form completed by each rater were collected and submitted as a piece of the data pool. Rater scores per paper were not averaged. Of the twelve raters, eight scored 22-27 papers each. One rater scored 32 papers and one rater scored 41 papers. Two raters scored under 20 papers – one 12, the other 9. (The latter submitted Writing Assessment Forms that were illegible and could not be scored.)

Raters

Each paper was to be read and scored by three different faculty raters. These raters were faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts (5), The Stetson School of Business and Economics (1), Engineering (1), the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (1), Tarver Library (1), English Language Institute (2), and Macon State College (1). The papers were devoid of student identifying information, but the content of many of the papers allowed the readers to surmise the College or School of the writer.

With a total of 106 papers, one would expect that the total number of “reads” would be 318 (given that each paper was read three times). However, the number of “reads” (and total number of scores on each item) ranged from 259-292. The low totals in this range reflect the confusion by the raters regarding particular items and the inability to score some of one rater’s forms. The following table outlines the number of papers included in the sample by each College/School along with the lowest total number of “reads”. This table gives one a feel for how the number of papers submitted by College/School translates into number of “reads”.

| Number of Papers and Lowest Number of “Reads” by College/School | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| College/School | Number in Sample | Number of Times Read |
| SSBE/Atlanta | 5 | 13 |
| SSBE/Macon | 12 | 36 |
| SSBE/Centers | 18 | 52 |
| Nursing | 15 | 36 |
| CLA | 23 | 51 |
| CCPS | 23 | 45 |
| Engineering | 10 | 26 |
| TOTAL | 106 | 259 |

Note: The Tift College of Education (Macon/Centers) was not included. CCPS was extracted from TCE in 01/01/03. The papers collected were from the resulting CCPS courses.

Sample

The student writing samples were extracted from culmination courses in the various Colleges/Schools. Students enrolled in particular courses submitted papers for review. The particular paper was determined by the instructor of the class. From the class papers College/School samples were randomly selected. An attempt was made to have the College/School samples reflect the proportion of students in the overall undergraduate student population. The type of paper and length varied. Using this methodology requires careful consideration of the type of course and writing assignment used to extract the samples.

Results

The raters expressed concern about three items on the Writing Assessment Form. They did not feel that they had adequate or consistent information on these items to properly score them.

These items are omitted from the data report:

- < Responds fully to the assignment
- < Expresses its purpose clearly and persuasively
- < Is directed toward and meets the needs of a defined audience

The results of the total sample are presented below in percentages:

| Item # | Inadequate | Weak | Adequate | Very Good | Exceptional |
|--|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 7. Begins and ends effectively | 5.9 (17) | 21.7 (63) | 25.2 (73) | 33.1 (96) | 14.1 (41) |
| 8. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details | 5.2 (15) | 17.1 (49) | 27.5 (79) | 33.1 (95) | 17.1 (49) |
| 9. Is well-organized and unified | 4.5 (13) | 16.6 (48) | 30.3 (88) | 31.7 (92) | 16.9 (49) |
| 10. Uses appropriate, direct language | 4.5 (13) | 14.5 (42) | 22.1 (64) | 40.1 (116) | 18.7 (22) |
| 11. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources | 14.6 (38) | 17.3 (45) | 22.7 (59) | 28.5 (74) | 16.9 (44) |
| 12. Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling and format | 9.5 (27) | 16.5 (47) | 25.3 (72) | 31.9 (91) | 16.8 (48) |
| 13. Maintains a level of excellence throughout | 6.0 (17) | 17.7 (50) | 30.0 (85) | 32.9 (93) | 13.4 (38) |
| 14. Shows originality and creativity in realizing the above items | 4.5 (13) | 19.0 (55) | 32.1 (93) | 29.3 (85) | 15.2 (44) |
| 15. Overall Evaluation | 4.1 (12) | 17.5 (51) | 31.2 (91) | 32.9 (96) | 14.4 (42) |

Note: Items 1-3 pertain to rater and College/School information. Items 4-6 are the omitted items.

The overall evaluation of writing samples revealed 138 of the 292 submitted scores or 47.3% of the scores were “very good” or “exceptional”. On the same item 229 of the 292 submitted scores or 78.5% of the scores were “adequate”, “very good”, or “exceptional”.

The group average on this item is 3.36. The expected writing outcome suggested that students would average at least 3.5 on the overall evaluation using the Writing Assessment Form.

The expected outcome also suggested that 75% of the students would achieve at least a 3.0 on each measured writing dimension. This was true except for two dimensions – “Begins and ends effectively” and “Correctly acknowledges and documents sources”. The following table summarizes information pertinent to this outcome:

| Percentage of Students Who Achieve at Least a 3.0 on the Dimensions of the Writing Assessment Form | |
|---|-------------------|
| <u>Item</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
| 7. Begins and ends effectively | 72.4 |
| 8. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details | 77.7 |
| 9. Is well-organized and unified | 78.9 |
| 10. Uses appropriate, direct language | 80.9 |
| 11. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources | 68.1 |
| 12. Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling and format | 74.0 |
| 13. Maintains a level of excellence throughout | 76.3 |
| 14. Shows originality and creativity in realizing the above items | 76.6 |
| 15. Overall Evaluation | 78.5 |

Conclusions/Implications

The expected outcomes regarding students performance on this measure were not met. Students did not average at least a 3.5 on the overall evaluation nor did 75% of the students achieve at least a 3.0 on each measured writing dimension. Student performance was not far off the mark, but the outcomes were not met.

In a general review of student performance by College and School, it is clear that the School of Engineering students were most consistent in their writing and garnered the most “exceptional” scores. Strong, consistent writing samples also came from the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing. Students in the College of Liberal Arts scored consistently in the “very good” to “adequate” range on most items. The papers that earned the highest ratings were more often discipline specific, research or final project papers. The poorest papers were brief project proposals. As mentioned, the course and paper selected for inclusion in the sample are important. The writing assessment seeks to measure students’ writing abilities as an end product of a Mercer education; therefore, all Colleges/Schools are most likely to select advanced work from advanced courses.

Assessment Method II – Graduation Survey 2002-2003

Graduation Survey 2002-2003 and Scoring

The Graduation Survey is a local measure designed to assess (1) student perceptions of personal growth/development in both academic and personal areas and (2) general levels of student satisfaction. All undergraduate graduating seniors on the Macon campus and in the Regional Academic Centers (RAC) complete the survey electronically as part of their graduation application. Currently, the measure is not available to undergraduate students on the Atlanta campus (Nursing, Business).

Various items on the Graduation Survey use a three-, four-, or five-point Likert scale. The specific items included as part of this investigation use a three-point scale (1 = very much, 2 = somewhat, 3 = very little). Mean scores are determined for each item for both Macon students and RAC students.

Sample

A total of 515 Macon graduating seniors enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts, Stetson School of Business and Economics, School of Engineering, and the Tift College of Education completed the survey (not all completed every item of the survey). The sample was distributed as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| CLA | 242 |
| SSBE | 141 |
| EDU | 29 |
| EGR | 103 |
| Total Macon | 515 |

A total of 455 graduating seniors completing their degrees at the Regional Academic Centers completed the survey. These students are enrolled in the Stetson School of Business and Economics, the Tift College of Education and the College of Continuing and Professional Studies (including Organizational Leadership). The following represents the sample distribution. It must be noted that CCPS was extracted from the Tift College in January 2003. Graduating seniors in these colleges were able to choose either college as the degree grantor. Therefore, the number of Tift students also includes some students completing degrees outside of education.

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| SSBE | 59 |
| EDU | 195 |
| CCPS | 102 |
| OL (CCPS) | 99 |
| Total Centers | 455 |

Results

It was expected that graduating seniors would indicate that their educational experience at Mercer “very much” or “somewhat” contributed to their personal growth in writing effectively. This would be evidenced by mean scores of 1.50 or below on the Graduation Survey. The results appear below:

| Mean Scores of Colleges/Schools in Macon and in the Regional Academic Centers on item: “Educational Experience at Mercer Contributed to Personal Growth/Development in Writing Effectively” | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Macon CLA | Macon SSBE | Macon EGR | Macon EDU | Macon Total | RAC SSBE | RAC EDU | RAC CCPS | RAC OL (CCPS) | RAC Total |
| 1.40 | 1.66 | 1.53 | 1.68 | 1.51 | 1.27 | 1.34 | 1.35 | 1.31 | 1.33 |

Conclusions

According to the established criteria, graduating seniors on the Macon campus do not believe that their educational experience at Mercer contributed to their ability to write effectively. However, students in the Regional Academic Centers do. The expected mean score (1.50 or below) was not reached for Macon campus students (1.51), but it was reached for students in the Regional Academic Centers (1.33). It is important to note that the undergraduate curriculum for Macon students does not require (or typically include) an English composition course. Two English composition courses are required for Center students.

Recommendations/Use of Results for the Writing Assessment

It is recommended that this outcome be assessed again in 2003-2004. The assessment of this outcome will be made more robust as the following are considered:

Writing Assessment Form:

- Some revision of the Writing Assessment Form
- Larger samples from each College and School (at least 25 per)
- Inclusion of the Tift College of Education
- Reconsider the type of sample papers collected from CCPS
- Include faculty raters from CCPS and Center programs
- Collect writing samples at the end of term Fall 2003
- Common topic for written sample
- Differentiate between students in the distributional and Great Books programs
- Differentiate between students who completed general education at Mercer and those who transferred in

Graduation Survey:

- Inclusion of students on the Atlanta campus (Nursing, SSBE)

Following the assessment of writing in 2002-2003 the following has occurred:

- Reassessment of the goals and standards of the First Year Seminar (FYS) course
- Re-establishment of a list of writing standards for teachers FYS
- Establish a living, growing list of excellent and effective practices that have worked in FYS and make it available to all teachers
- Re-establishment of an undergraduate curriculum committee
- Hire of a “writing expert” to address the writing needs of students and to work with faculty members (2003-2004 for CPPS / 2004-2005 for CLA)
- Inventoried writing requirements for the business core courses to determine if a greater emphasis on writing should be placed throughout the business core courses
- Business faculty have been encouraged to use the writing dimensions in the grading of written work
- Business students are provided with (a web-based portfolio of) exemplary written work samples
- The Director of the Academic Resource Center meets with MAP 101 students to provide a writing tutorial and resources.
- Business faculty are exploring the possibility of replacing one of the FYS course requirements in favor of BUS 281 or a TCO course where public speaking (BUS 281) and writing (BUS 281 and TCO) are emphasized