Chapter VII: INTERIM WRITING ASSESSMENT

Who takes it?
Students enrolled in JINS courses.

When is it administered?
Spring 2003, Fall 2003, and Spring 2004 semesters.

How long does it take for a student to complete the assessment?
5 minutes.

When are results typically available?
At the conclusion of each of the three semesters listed above.

What type of information is sought?
Students' writing methods.

From whom are the results available?
The Writing Across the University Committee.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?
The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the campus community through the *Assessment Almanac*.

Are results available by division or discipline?
No.

Are results comparable to data of other universities?
No.

University Writing Assessment

<u>The Interim Writing Assessment (Spring 2003-Spring 2004)</u>

In Spring 2003, Fall 2003, and Spring 2004, a significant number of JINS students participated in an interim writing assessment designed to provide the University with data on how upper-level students evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as writers and how they describe their process of composition. The interim writing assessment specifically served students who did not complete the Sophomore Writing Assessment (SWE) before enrolling in JINS courses or enrolled in JINS courses after the SWE program was discontinued in May 2002 and before the new writing assessment was approved and piloted by the university in Spring 2004.

As part of the interim writing assessment, students were asked to submit samples of their writing to their JINS instructors and then fill out questionnaires that asked them to respond to the following prompts:

- Describe step-by-step what you do from the time a professor assigns a paper topic to the time you turn the paper in.

- Do you tend to leave yourself enough time to finish projects or do you usually write up to the last minute?

- Is there any part of the writing process you tend to neglect or would like to spend more time on if you could? (ex: prewriting, editing, seeking feedback from your peers, revising, proofreading, etc.)

- Based on your own self-assessment and the feedback you have received from teachers and peers, what do you think are your strongest skills as a writer? What continues to concern you about your writing? Consider issues such as your ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge in writing; communicate your findings; write for particular audiences; exhibit a mastery of syntax and formatting conventions; etc.

- What specific changes would you like to make in your writing style or writing process that will enhance your ability to express yourself and communicate your thoughts more effectively?

A total of 824 students participated in the assessment during the three semesters in which it was administered. The number of students who participated fluctuated each semester, depending on how many of the students had completed the SWE prior to enrolling.

Table 1: Number of JINS students participating in the interim writing assessment:

Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04
244	140	404

All of the questionnaires submitted by students were read and all the responses for each prompt were tabulated. However, not all students responded to the prompts on the questionnaires in equal depth or detail. The following tables record the most prevalent responses to each of the questions asked. In cases where students gave more than one response to prompts that allowed for more than one kind of answer, each response was tabulated separately. In analyzing the data, more importance was placed on accurately reflecting the wording of student responses than in combining similar statements into comprehensive categories. The responses to the questionnaire not only demonstrate the students' own assessment of their writing habits, strengths, and weaknesses, but also reflect the expectations of their professors and the emphasis they place on various aspects of the writing process.

Table 2: Typical Writing Process

Response	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Simply write	15.98%	5.00%	17.33%	12.77%
Research and write	12.70%	12.14%	18.56%	14.47%
Draft, following a mental/written outline, edit	9.43%	2.14%	11.88%	7.82%
Write, review, turn in	5.74%	---	1.24%	3.49%
Draft with minimal editing and revising	11.89%	5.00%	1.24%	6.04%
Draft, revise, edit	4.51%	7.14%	5.45%	5.70%
Brainstorm, draft, edit, turn in	20.49%	10.00%	17.57%	16.02%
Brainstorm, research, draft, and revise	18.85%	38.57%	19.55%	25.66%
Draft, then revise and edit multiple drafts	7.79%	10.00%	5.45%	7.75%
Write, peer review, correct, turn in	---	7.86%	---	2.62%
Draft by hand, edit, and then type final draft	1.43%	---	00.50%	0.64%

Table 3: Time Management

Response	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Yes, I leave enough time to finish projects	20.90%	57.86%	11.14%	29.97%
No, I usually wait to the last minute	40.16%	28.57%	20.30%	29.68%
It depends on the circumstances	13.52%	9.29%	1.98%	8.26%
I don't know	25.41%	4.29%	7.67%	12.46%

Table 4: Most Neglected Aspect of Writing Process

Response	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Prewriting	24.59%	27.86%	22.03%	24.83%
Outlining	11.89%	---	5.69%	5.86%
Planning	7.38%	10.71%	2.97%	7.02%
Organizing	6.15%	---	2.48%	2.88%
Proofreading	5.33%	9.29%	14.11%	9.58%
Editing	5.74%	6.43%	7.92%	6.70%
Revising	5.74%	12.86%	27.48%	15.36%
Both proofreading and revising	10.66%	24.29%	---	11.65%
Seeking feedback from peers	7.79%	12.86%	28.96%	16.54%
Seeking feedback from Writing Center	3.69%	4.29%	5.70%	4.56%
Seeking feedback from professor	2.87%	1.43%	4.45%	2.92%

Table 5: Areas of Strength As A Writer

Responses	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Vocabulary/Use of language	16.80%	10.00%	6.36%	11.05%
Spelling and grammar	15.16%	11.43%	18.18%	14.92%
Creativity	11.89%	15.00%	10.68%	12.52%
Unique point of view/voice/style	9.02%	6.43%	7.50%	7.65%
Research skills	8.02%	5.00%	2.95%	5.32%
Passion	7.38%	4.29%	0.68%	4.12%
Ability to convey both sides of argument	5.74%	00.69%	2.04%	2.82%
Organization/structure	5.33%	7.14%	15.68%	9.38%
Attention to Audience	4.92%	7.14%	5.23%	5.76%
Development/Support of thesis	4.51%	9.29%	3.86%	5.89%
Ideas	4.51%	---	4.55%	3.02%
Critical Thinking/Analysis	3.69%	20.00%	15.23%	12.97%
Confidence	3.28%	00.69%	00.91%	1.63%
Sentence structure	3.28%	6.43%	00.68%	3.46%
Clarity/Conciseness	2.87%	13.57%	4.77%	7.07%
Ability to argue effectively	2.46%	2.14%	2.73%	2.44%
Use and integration of evidence	2.46%	2.14%	2.95%	2.52%
Ability to get thoughts down on paper	2.05%	7.14%	0.91%	3.37%
Ability to communicate thoughts	2.05%	---	5.91%	2.65%
Transitions/Flow	---	5.71%	---	1.90%
Conclusions	---	3.57%	---	1.19%
Enjoyment	---	3.57%	---	1.19%
Clear/strong thesis	1.23%	2.14%	2.27%	1.88%

Table 6: Areas of Weakness As a Writer

Responses	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Critical Thinking/Analysis	14.34%	12.14%	8.91%	11.80%
Grammar, spelling, punctuation	12.30%	20.00%	26.49%	19.60%
Ability to put thoughts into words	11.07%	12.14%	11.39%	11.53%
Organization/Structure	9.02%	2.86%	10.64%	7.51%
Thesis	8.61%	2.86%	1.73%	4.40%
Clarity/Coherence	7.79%	10.00%	8.66%	8.82%
Introductions	7.79%	2.86%	1.73%	4.13%
Procrastination/Poor time management	7.38%	7.86%	2.48%	5.91%
Misjudgment of/Inability to write for audience	6.56%	9.29%	8.91%	8.25%
Transitions/Flow	6.56%	7.86%	4.46%	6.29%
Vocabulary	5.33%	4.29%	2.72%	4.11%
Wordiness/Redundancy	4.92%	5.00%	4.21%	4.71%
Conclusions	4.51%	3.57%	1.49%	3.19%
Difficulty narrowing topic	3.69%	2.14%	4.46%	3.43%
Lack of focus	3.28%	2.14%	4.95%	3.46%
Lack of consistency	2.89%	---	0.99%	1.30%
Demonstrating Relevance	2.46%	7.14%	2.48%	4.03%
Research skills/citation	2.05%	5.00%	7.19%	4.75%
Write like I talk	2.05%	---	2.72%	1.59%
Don't prewrite	1.23%	---	1.73%	0.99%
Weak argumentation	1.23%	---	1.98%	1.07%
Syntax	---	7.14%	---	2.38%
Lack of creativity/risk-taking	---	5.71%	0.74%	2.15%
Lack of development	---	5.00%	0.74%	1.91%
Sentence structure	---	4.29%	---	1.43%
Formatting	---	2.86%	---	0.95%
Lack of Motivation	---	1.43%	---	0.48%

Table 7: Goals for Further Progress as Writers

Responses	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Improve time management skills	11.06%	22.14%	15.35%	16.18%
Improve vocabulary	8.61%	7.14%	8.66%	8.14%
Improve flow/transitions	8.20%	10.71%	5.94%	8.28%
Work on analyzing/summarizing	7.79%	3.57%	5.69%	5.68%
Work on creativity/risk-taking	7.38%	4.29%	0.74%	4.14%
Establish relevance	6.56%	3.57%	0.74%	3.62%
Improve organization	6.15%	7.14%	9.16%	7.48%
Put more effort into proofreading/editing/revising	4.51%	19.29%	22.52%	15.44%
Work on conclusions	4.10%	2.86%	0.50%	2.49%
Improve grammar/spelling/punctuation	3.69%	10.00%	16.58%	10.09%
Use precise language/convey ideas clearly and concisely	3.69%	11.43%	10.64%	8.59%
Put in best effort	3.28%	2.14%	1.49%	2.30%
Develop brainstorming skills	2.87%	---	1.98%	1.62%
Keep potential readers in mind	2.87%	2.86%	2.72%	2.82%
Develop arguments more thoroughly	2.46%	5.71%	4.46%	4.21%
Narrow topic	2.46%	1.43%	1.49%	1.79%
Work on critical thinking, developing ideas	2.05%	7.14%	6.19%	5.13%
Gain more confidence in writing skills	1.64%	2.86%	2.48%	2.33%
Balance reasoning with emotion	1.23%	---	1.24%	0.82%
Use outlining more effectively	1.23%	4.29%	12.13%	5.88%
Focus/Stay on topic	---	7.14%	---	2.38%
Put more effort into prewriting	---	7.14%	---	2.38%
Develop research skills and use research more effectively	---	5.00%	6.44%	3.81%
Use outlining more effectively	---	4.29%	12.13%	5.47%
Be more objective	---	3.57%	---	1.19%
Improve sentence structure	---	3.57%	2.48%	2.02%
Develop a strong/unique voice	---	---	4.21%	1.40%
Learn to use formal language	---	---	6.19%	2.06%
Develop versatility as a writer	---	2.86%	---	0.95%

Table 8: What can your professors do to help you meet your writing goals?

Responses	Spr 03	F 03	Spr 04	Average
Provide constructive criticism about the paper	78.28%	67.86%	25.00%	57.05%
Give feedback on the thesis/arguments	6.56%	5.00%	5.69%	5.75%
Establish a more formal writing process	3.28%	9.29%	2.52%	5.03%
Provide reasons behind determination of final grade	3.28%	---	3.71%	2.33%
Give feedback on large conceptual issues while critiquing first draft	2.87%	5.00%	8.17%	5.35%
Require students to turn in drafts	2.46%	7.14%	6.68%	5.43%
Encourage use of an outline	2.05%	---	4.95%	2.33%
Point out where I lose the audience	1.64%	---	3.22%	1.62%
Suggest alternative words	1.23%	---	7.43%	2.89%
Assist with research	1.23%	---	0.50%	0.58%
Get papers back quickly or requiring the due dates	0.82%	---	4.46%	1.76%
Give feedback on strong points	---	---	12.62%	4.21%
Give feedback on sentence structure	---	---	8.42%	2.81%
Give feedback on grammar	---	---	16.34%	5.45%
Encourage peer review	---	---	11.63%	3.88%
Offer to meet with students	---	---	5.20%	1.73%

A New Page in Writing Assessment at Truman

A new writing assessment, passed by Undergraduate Council on February 12, 2004 and approved by Faculty Senate March 25, 2004, replaced the Interim Writing Assessment in Spring 2004. The multi-faceted writing assessment being piloted includes:

- an analytical assessment of student-selected writing samples as part of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Portfolio;

- a collegial review of faculty-selected writing samples from the writing-enhanced courses;

- the formation of a university-wide committee to administer the writing assessment programs, analyze the data collected, provide resources for faculty teaching writing-enhanced courses, and act as a liaison to other university bodies interested in writing assessment.

As a result, both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, which will provide a detailed picture of student writing at Truman. The new writing assessment will meet the needs of both improving the teaching and learning of writing at Truman and providing accountability to a variety of University stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, parents, and lawmakers.

The Analytical Assessment

As a result of working closely with the Director of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Portfolio, a new prompt and rubric were designed so that writing could be assessed in conjunction with critical thinking during the LSP portfolio reading workshop. Representatives from the Writing Assessment Implementation Committee assisted the Portfolio director in designing the prompt, developing an analytic rubric, and training readers during two consecutive portfolio reading periods in Spring 2004. Unlike the holistic ranking process normally used to evaluate Portfolio entries, student writing samples were assessed using a rubric derived from the Writing-Enhanced (WE) outcome statements and assigned a series of scores evaluating whether particular WE outcomes were met. The results from this pilot will be published in the 2005 *Assessment Almanac* and will be used to further calibrate the scoring rubric and inform any further changes made to the writing/critical thinking prompt.

The Collegial Review

Part of a comprehensive proposal for the new multiple-component writing assessment program at Truman is a collegial review of student writing. Such a review will continue the tradition of collaborative review of student writing begun with the Sophomore Writing Experience and will provide valuable qualitative data to complement the quantitative data provided by other assessments already in place. When fully implemented, the collegial review will provide professional development for faculty who teach writing, provide constructive feedback to both faculty and student writers, encourage the improvement of teaching and learning of writing, create an environment that supports faculty inquiry into what constitutes compelling evidence our learning outcomes are being met, and establish a method for providing that evidence to all University stakeholders.

In Spring 2004 a proposal for a Collegial Review Workshop pilot project was funded through an assessment grant from the office of the VPAA. The objectives of the pilot project were to develop, test, and refine protocols and procedures for a collegial review of student writing at Truman, as well as to make suggestions for implementation of a full collegial review in the future. Faculty members were invited to participate in a discussion of samples of student writing during two one-day workshops in Summer 2004 and Fall 2004. The results from this pilot will be published in the 2005 *Assessment Almanac*.

<u>The Writing Across the University Committee</u>

The formation of a committee that would bring together faculty and staff from across the University to facilitate the teaching and learning of writing was central to the design of the new writing assessment program. In the Fall of 2004, the VPAA appointed faculty and staff to serve on the new Writing Across the University Committee (WAU) committee, based on recommendations from the Division Heads. The duties of the WAU committee will include:

- Assisting the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies in providing faculty with resources for developing and teaching WE courses (sample syllabi, list of faculty teaching similar WE courses, etc);
- Assisting the Center For Teaching and Learning Director in designing workshops to promote faculty discussion of various aspects of writing (creation of writing prompts and rubrics, methods of providing useful feedback to students, etc);
- Administering the Collegial Review and the Analytical Writing Assessment embedded in the LSP Senior Portfolio, which would include reviewing rubrics and outcome statements, training readers, designing prompts, etc.;
- Collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and reporting on all data pertaining to writing to stakeholders (including data from nationally normed measures like the NSSE and CSEQ and Truman's own GSQ), as well as data from in-house measures such as the LSP Senior portfolio, the Interview Project, and the Collegial review;
- Making recommendations after reviewing collected data on the effectiveness of the LSP, major/minor curricula, and support services in helping students meet the Writing-Enhanced outcomes;
- Acting as a liaison for the various bodies interested in writing assessment (Design and Implementation Group of the Assessment Committee, Undergraduate Council, the Writing Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning, etc.).

The WAU committee will submit their first annual report to the *Assessment Almanac* next year. Its work will inaugurate a new era in writing assessment at Truman that provides rich quantitative (Analytical LSP Portfolio Assessment) and qualitative (Collegial Review) data on students' strengths and weaknesses in writing; links writing assessment to learning outcomes already in place for writing-enhanced courses; provides support for faculty teaching WE courses and gives them opportunities to reflect on the practice of teaching writing with their colleagues; incorporates professional development as an integral part of the assessment; places relatively little burden on students and faculty, and thus addresses the perceived lack of motivation to participate in assessment; uses multiple measures to provide a variety of data; uses existing assessment tools to streamline the assessment procedure, promote cost effectiveness, and eliminate redundancy; and provides a clearing house for assessment data relating to writing practice and assures that the data will be analyzed, synthesized, and reported in a way that can inform the teaching and study of writing at Truman.