

Chapter XV: WRITING ASSESSMENT

Who takes it?

Student writing samples can be obtained from every level.

When is it administered?

Samples are obtained in the fall and spring semesters and are evaluated in the summer and/or subsequent semesters.

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

No time—the writing samples require no extra work by the students. Submissions are obtained through writing students have already completed through their coursework.

What office administers it?

No office administers it. The Analytical Assessment is embedded in the Portfolio Project. The Collegial Review will be supervised by The Writing Across the University Committee.

Who originates the assessment?

The Writing Across the University Committee maintains oversight of the analytical and qualitative assessments.

When are results typically available?

Some assessment data is currently available about the Analytical Assessment. The Collegial Review is still being refined, although some information exists concerning the pilot project.

What type of information is sought?

The Analytical Assessment proposes to identify evidence demonstrating students' knowledge and skills in writing described in the Learning Outcomes for Writing-Enhanced courses. The Writing Across the University Committee will also review appropriate survey data (NSSE, GSQ, CSEQ) to assess students' writing habits, attitudes, etc. Additionally, the collegial review of faculty-selected writing samples from students in their classes will provide more qualitative data for faculty and other constituencies.

From whom are the results available?

The results will eventually be available through the Writing Across the University Committee.

To whom are the results regularly distributed?

The results will eventually be regularly distributed to the campus community through reports, presentations, and the *Assessment Almanac*.

Are results available by division or discipline?

No specific divisional or discipline results are currently available at this time.

Are results comparable to data of other universities?

No results are currently comparable to data of other universities.

A New Writing Assessment

After two years of research and reflection, the Writing Assessment Committee presented a proposal for a new writing assessment to University governing bodies in spring of 2004. The writing assessment, subsequently approved by Undergraduate Council (UGC) and Faculty Senate, featured three branches: 1) a cross-curricular writing-enhanced (WE) committee, called the Writing Across the University (WAU) Committee, that would empower faculty teaching WE courses, 2) a Collegial Review that would involve faculty reading and assessing faculty-selected writing samples and would provide rich qualitative data about writing done in WE courses as well as provide meaningful faculty development, and 3) an Analytical Writing Assessment that would involve the faculty reading and assessing student-selected writing samples using a rubric derived from WE student learning outcomes and would be implemented in conjunction with the Liberal Arts and Sciences Portfolio.

The new writing assessment proposed to:

- Collect evidence of students' demonstration of knowledge and skills in writing described in the Learning Outcomes for WE courses;
- Inform faculty understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses in writing across the curriculum;
- Promote continuing faculty reflection on what constitutes good writing and provide opportunities for further development of effective methods of teaching writing; and
- Provide accountability to a variety of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, parents, and lawmakers.

The following paragraphs update activity within each of the above initiatives: the WAU Committee, the Collegial Review, and the Analytical Writing Assessment

Writing Across the University (WAU) Committee

The WAU Committee was appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) in the fall of 2004 and began meeting during the spring of 2005. Work of the Committee in spring of 2005 included establishing the charge of the Committee as well as the assessment of WE courses in response to a request from UGC. During much of fall of 2005 and spring of 2006, the WAU Committee focused on designing and implementing the Collegial Review. Following is a list of accomplishments of the Committee in 2005-2006:

- Gathered information about state and national qualitative review initiatives and interviewed participants from the 2003 pilot Collegial Review conducted by Barbara Price
- Piloted the Collegial Review with Committee members in order to better understand the Collegial Review process and how it might be most effectively implemented
- Proposed a model for a Collegial Review, after taking into consideration best practices for qualitative assessment as well as funding concerns, and presented the model to the VPAA for feedback
- Revised the model proposal for Collegial Review in response to feedback from the VPAA and discussed the revised proposal with the VPAA and the Chair of Undergraduate Council, Candy Young; in light of feedback from the VPAA and UGC Chair, began to consider the Collegial Review as more of a faculty development effort and less of an assessment tool
- Discussed the findings of the Eng 190: Writing as Critical Thinking Committee, who completed a report on assessment of outcomes for this Essential Skill, with Chair Royce Kallerud; as a

result of the report, Committee members became more aware of the many sources of writing assessment data available across campus

- Planned for future directions of the Committee in 2006-2007, including examining all available assessment on the current state of writing across the University in response to a request from the VPAA; it is also anticipated that the Committee will pursue the implementation of the Collegial Review by working collaboratively with the Center for Teaching and Learning. The Collegial Review will offer support to teachers of writing (and writing students) in areas identified by writing assessment data as needing improvement.

Collegial Review

The Collegial Review was piloted with the assistance of a Scholarship of Assessment Grant in the summer of 2004. To date, the Collegial Review has not been fully implemented (see WAU Committee update above).

Analytical Writing Assessment

The Analytical Writing Assessment was piloted in the summer of 2004 and fully implemented in the summer of 2005. Results of the summer 2006 Analytical Writing Assessment can be found in the Assessment Almanac in Chapter XVI: Portfolio Assessment at <http://assessment.truman.edu/almanac/2006/CH16.pdf>.