

Chapter 10: Multi-State Collaborative Initiative

In 2017 Truman saw its third and final year as a participant in the Multi-State Collaborative Initiative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (MSC). MSC is a joint project by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and this initiative is intended to improve assessment of learning objectives within higher education. Nine states participated in the pilot year and the membership has expanded to a total of 13 states with approximately 70 institutions participating in the final Refinement Year activities. The participating institutions span a diverse group including two and four year institutions from both the public and private sectors. Additional information about the project is available at

<http://www.sheeo.org/projects/multi-state-collaborative-advance-quality-student-learning%E2%80%9494-msc>

<https://www.aacu.org/value/msc>

The project is similar in many ways to the Truman Portfolio. Student artifacts are scored by faculty who have been trained on specific rubrics. This kind of direct assessment allows for a richer understanding of student achievement than is possible with only surveys and standardized tests. For the pilot year, MSC included three prompts for student work: Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Quantitative Literacy. AAC&U VALUE rubrics were used to evaluate the work. (<https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>) For the Demonstration year, Civic Engagement was also studied, but Truman did not submit student work for this category. For the Refinement Year, Truman made submissions within both the Critical Thinking and Written Communication prompts.

Critical Thinking - (Figures 1, 2, 5, 6, & 9)

Truman submitted 96 artifacts for evaluation within the Critical Thinking prompt. Truman's average score was 2.45 on a 0-4 scale which compared very favorably to the overall average of 1.86 for all submissions. Truman's average remained strong even after breaking the down the scores into four year (4Y) and two year (CC) institutions which had overall averages of 2.00 and 1.61 respectively. Critical Thinking was evaluated for five subcategories including Explanation of issues, Evidence, Influence of context and assumptions, Student's position, and Conclusions and related outcomes. These subcategories have been broken down into the four year and community college cohorts (Figures 1 & 2) to allow for better evaluation of Truman's performance. A review of the data clearly shows that Truman outperformed the four year institutions, which in turn outperformed the community colleges, in all five subcategories. In general all cohorts scored highest in the first categories with performance dropping off as the rubric proceeded. A review of the general shape of the score distributions indicates that Truman students may be relatively stronger in the Position and Evidence subcategories, compared to the other groups, and this appears to be confirmed when the data are standardized to the Explanation category (Figures 5 & 6). The breakdown of individual scores (Figure 9) typically indicates 80% or more of the Truman submissions scored at the milestone or capstone level in each category (with very few 0's being present).

Written Communication - (Figures 3, 4, 7, 8, & 10)

Truman submitted 90 artifacts for evaluation within the Written Communication prompt. Truman's average score was 2.65 on a 0-4 scale which compared very strongly to the overall average of 2.09 for all submissions. As was seen for Critical Thinking, Truman's average remained strong even after breaking down the scores into four year (4Y) and two year (CC) institutions which had overall averages of 2.20 and 1.88 respectively. The subcategories scored for Written Communication were Context and Purpose, Content Development, Genre and Disciplinary Conventions, Sources and Evidence, and Control of Syntax and Mechanics. These subcategories have also been broken down into the four year and community college cohorts (Figures 3 & 4) and Truman once again outperformed its four year counterparts, who also outperformed the community colleges. In general scores decrease with each component of the rubric except for the last subcategory (Control of Syntax and Mechanics) where the cohorts typically did their best. The score distributions for Truman mimic the other cohorts and there doesn't appear to be any strong trends that would differentiate them from the four year or community colleges (other than the general trend of scoring better within each subcategory). The breakdown of individual scores (Figure 10) indicates most Truman submissions scored in the milestone or capstone range except for the Source subcategory, where a relatively large number of 0's were obtained. This could indicate a possible weakness in Truman students or could simply be an artifact of the type of submissions chosen for this prompt (which may not have specifically focused on writing samples that cited sources).

Conclusions

Truman students scored well on both categories for which work was submitted. The nature of the project, being in the early stages of development, and the relatively small Truman sample size warrant caution in comparing the results to those of other institutions. However, Truman students scored well above average in all areas as might be expected given our highly selective standing. It would be of interest to know how Truman would compare against a set of peer institutions rather than just a general population of four year and two year schools.

It is worthy to note that this is the final year for the MSC-SHEEO Initiative in its present form. With the depletion of the original grant used to fund this initiative, the project has since been handed over to the Value Institute (AAC&U in partnership with Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research) for continuation as a pay-for-services model. Truman was offered the opportunity to continue its participation in the project under the Value Institute but after careful evaluation it was determined to discontinue participation at this time. The existence of Truman's own portfolio project and general newness of the Value Institute were the primary reasons for withdrawing but future participation is possible should the Value Institute rubrics be established as a nationally accepted assessment tool.

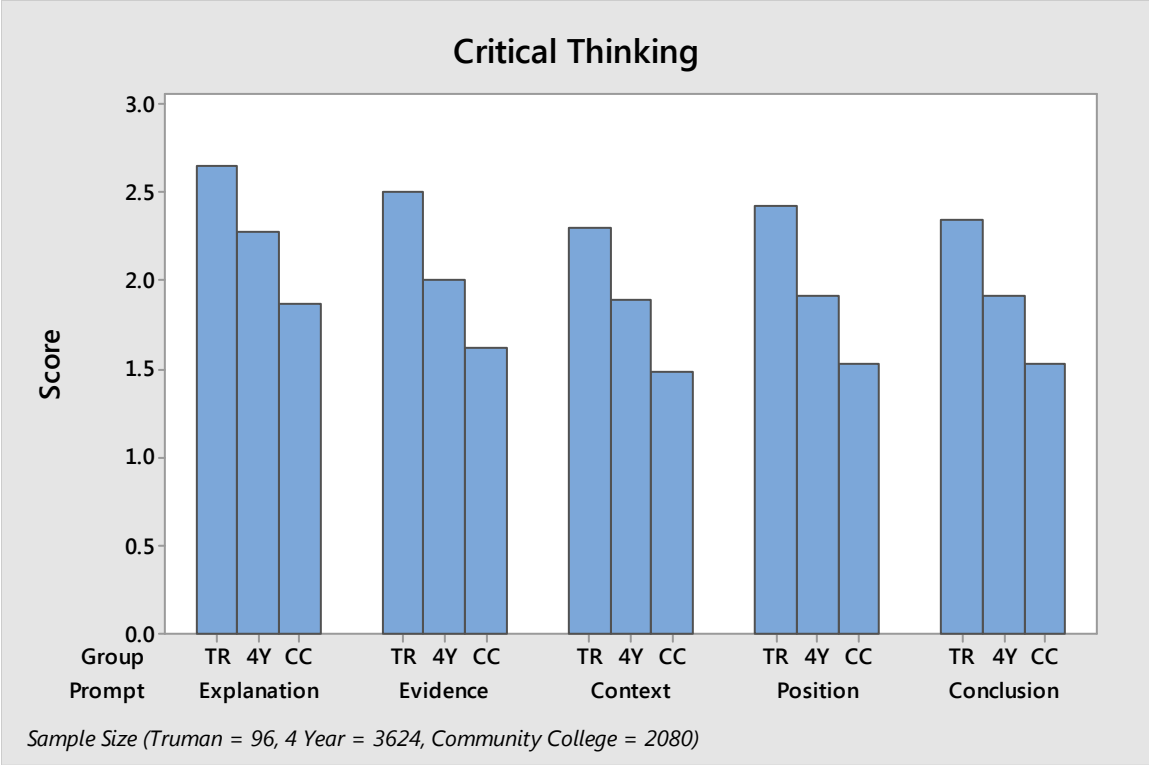


Figure 1 – Critical thinking sub scores for Truman, 4 Year Institutions, and Community Colleges

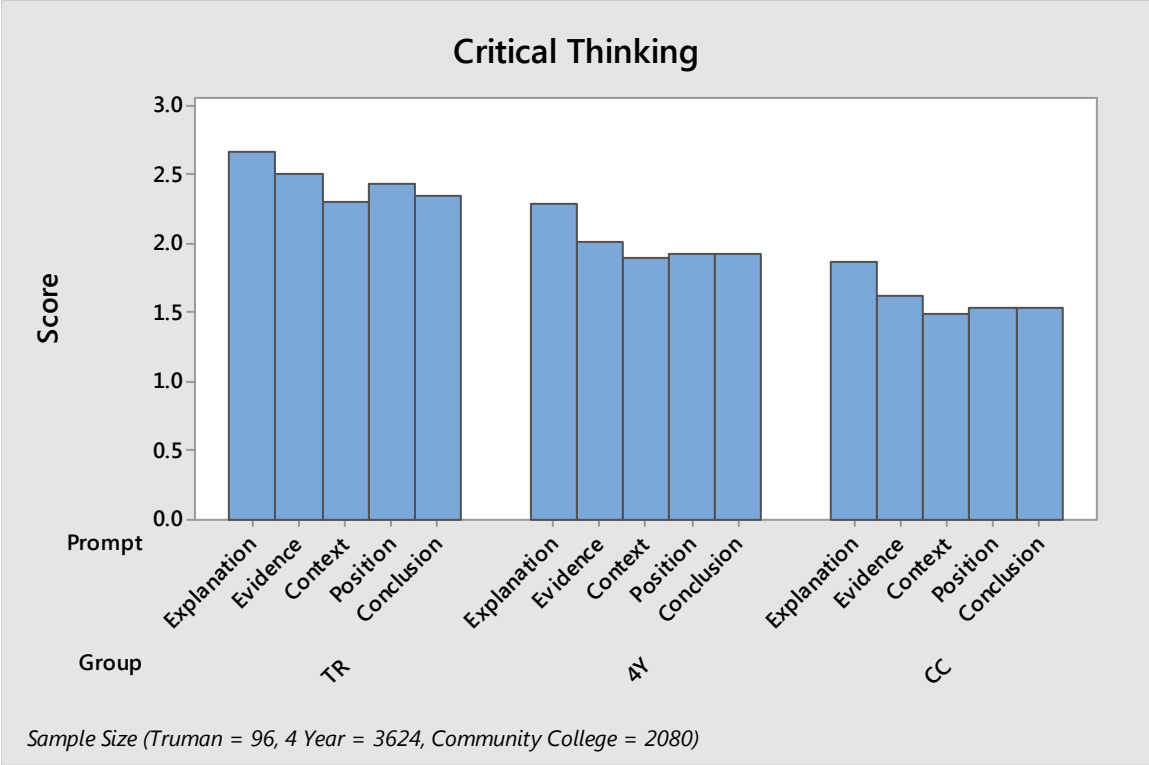


Figure 2 – Critical thinking sub scores for Truman, 4 Year Institutions, and Community Colleges

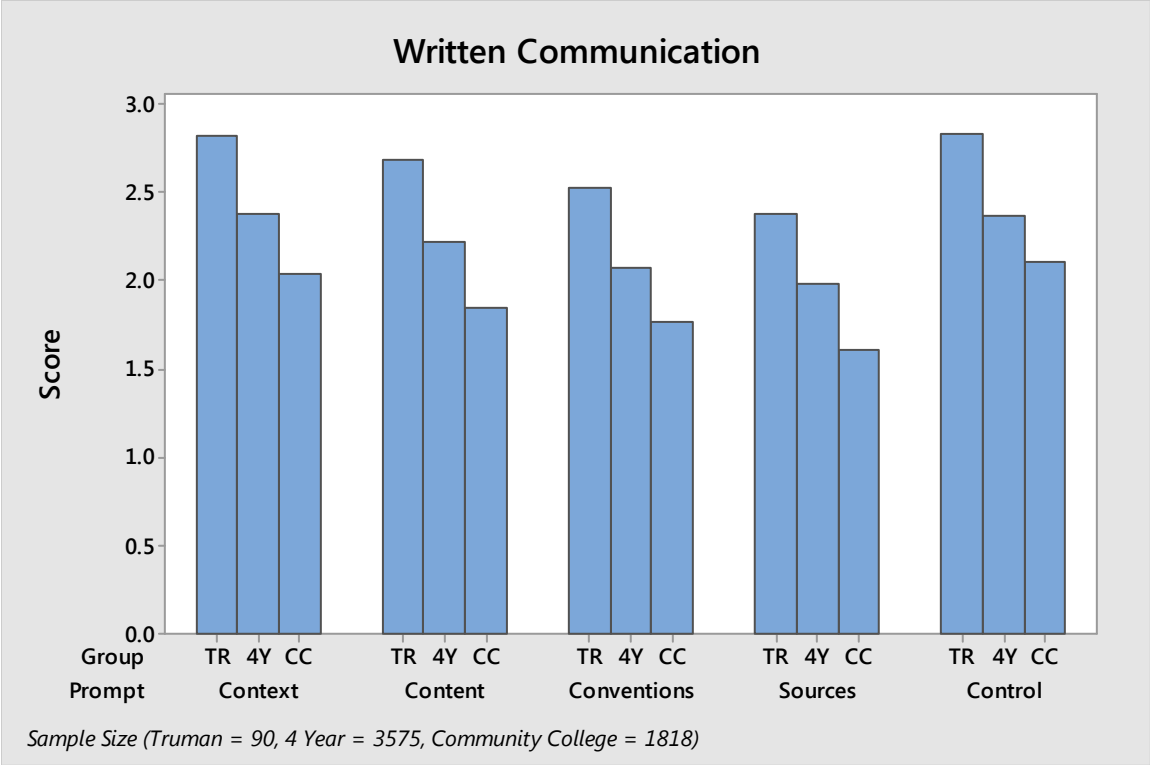


Figure 3 – Written communication sub scores for Truman, 4 Year Institutions, and Community Colleges

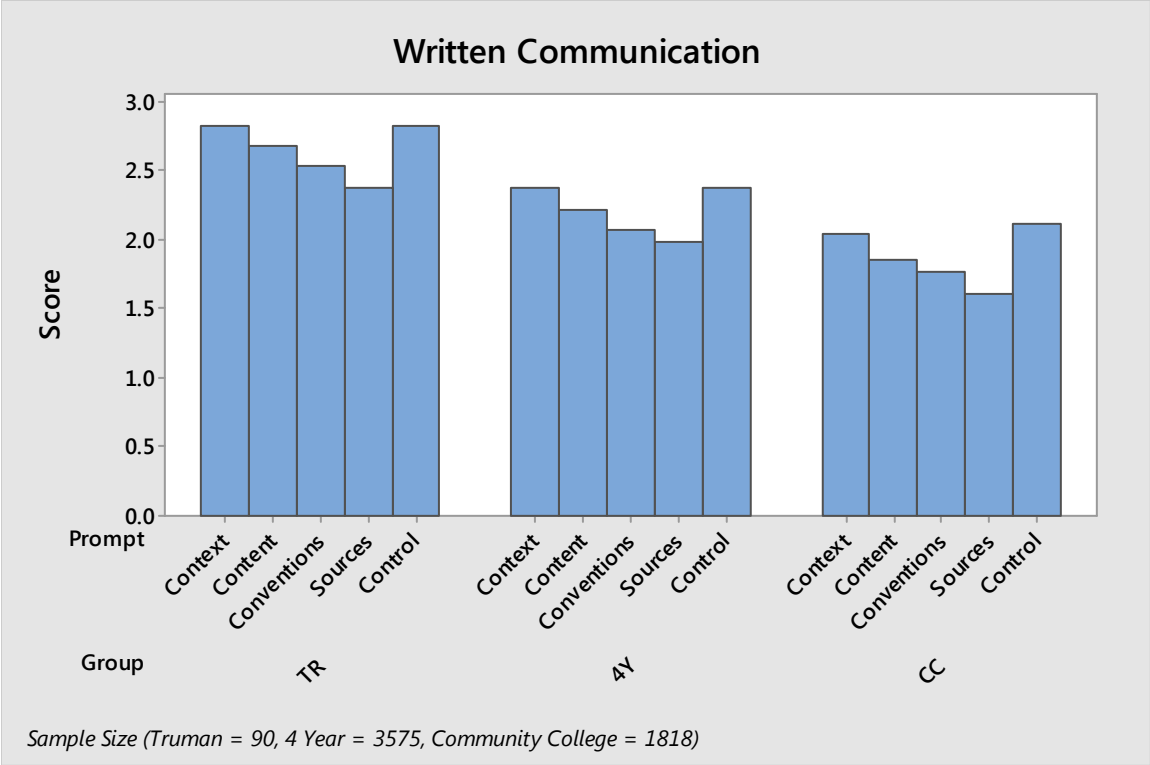


Figure 4 – Written communication sub scores for Truman, 4 Year Institutions, and Community Colleges

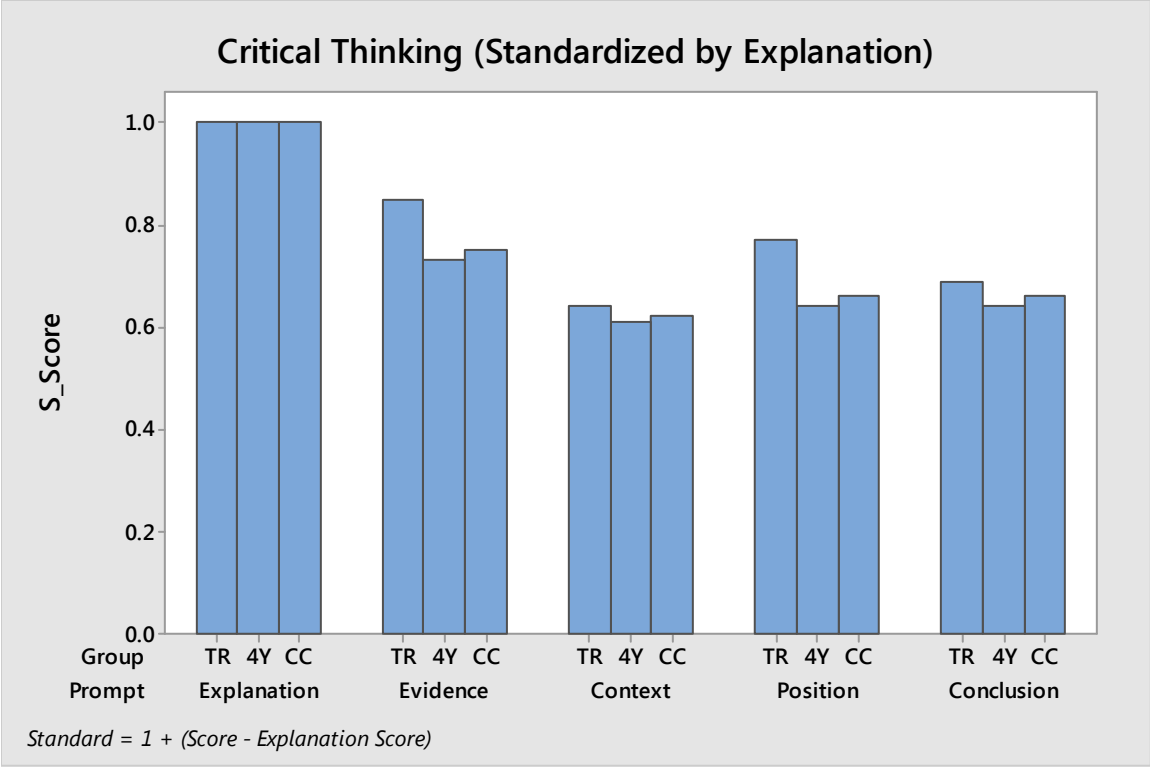


Figure 5 – Standardized Critical thinking sub scores (Truman, 4 Year, & Community College)

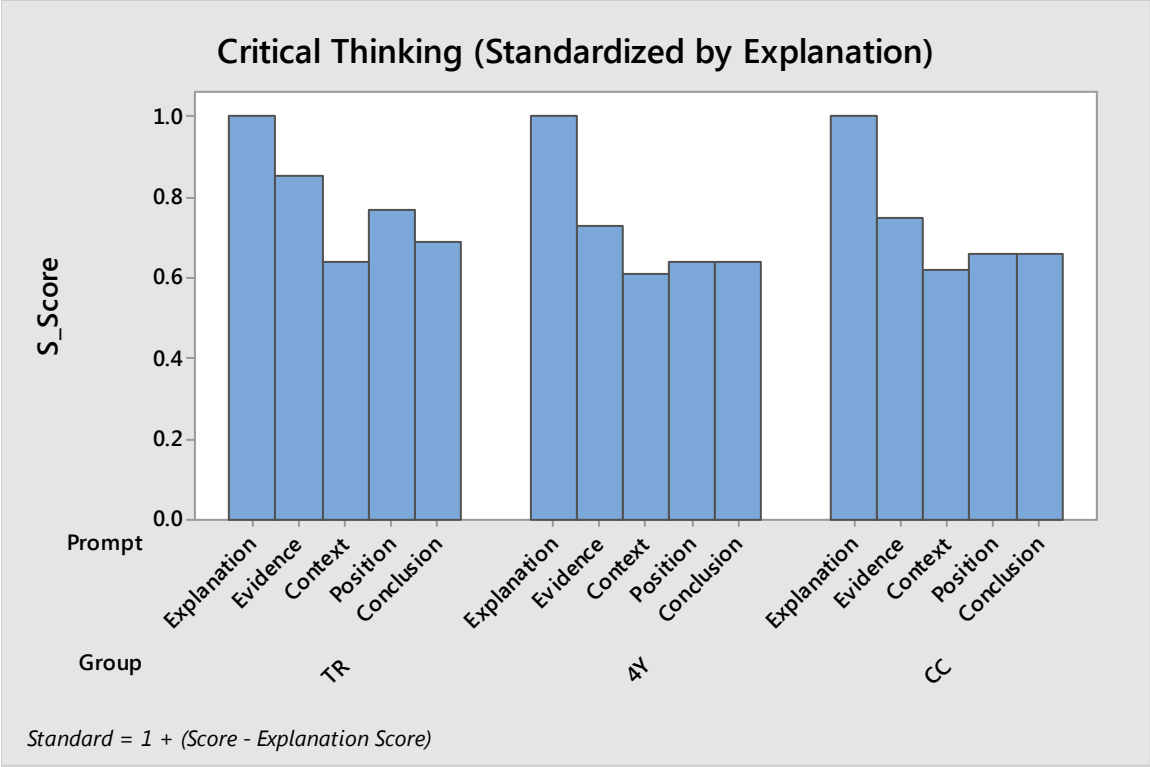


Figure 6 – Standardized Critical thinking sub scores (Truman, 4 Year, & Community College)

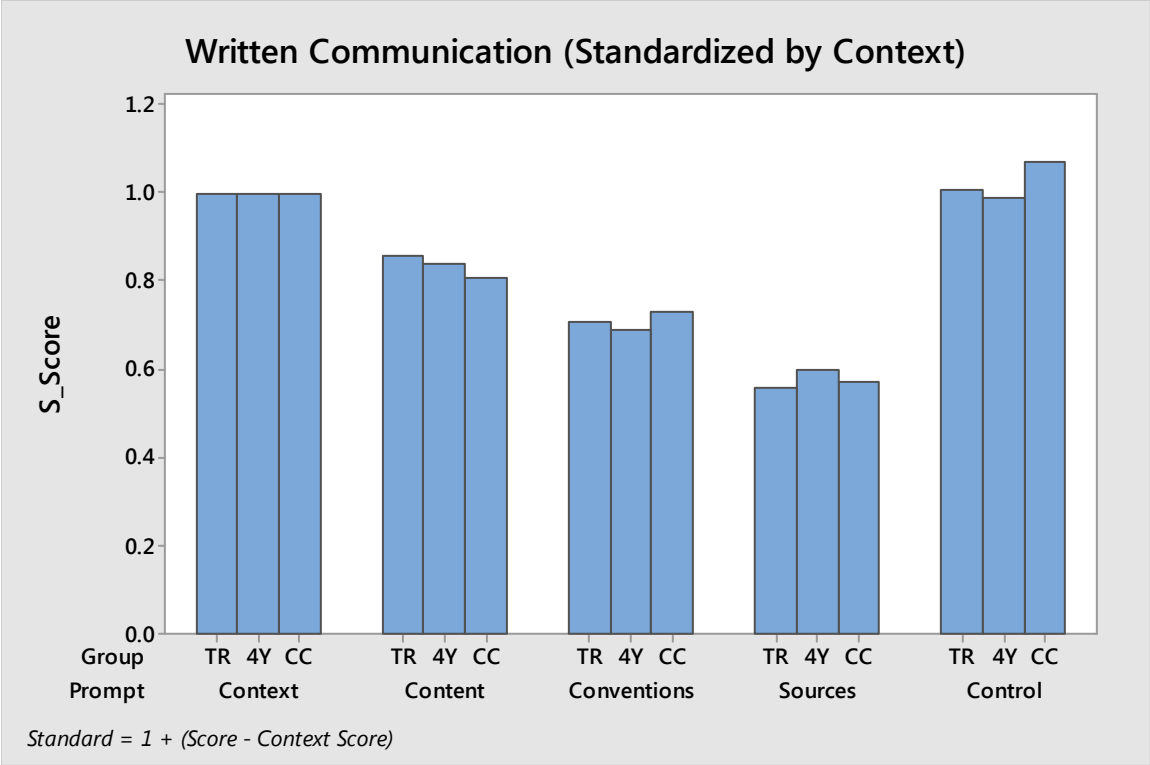


Figure 7 – Standardized written communication sub scores (Truman, 4 Year, & Community College)

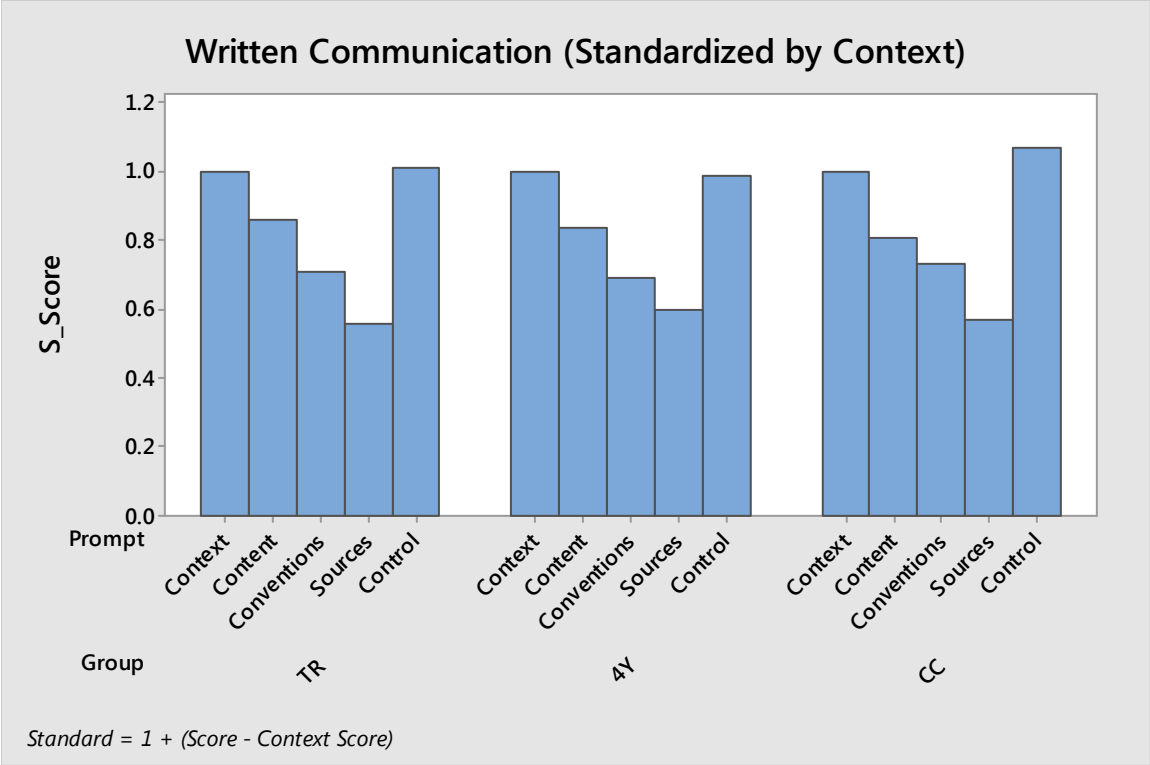


Figure 8 – Standardized written communication sub scores (Truman, 4 Year, & Community College)

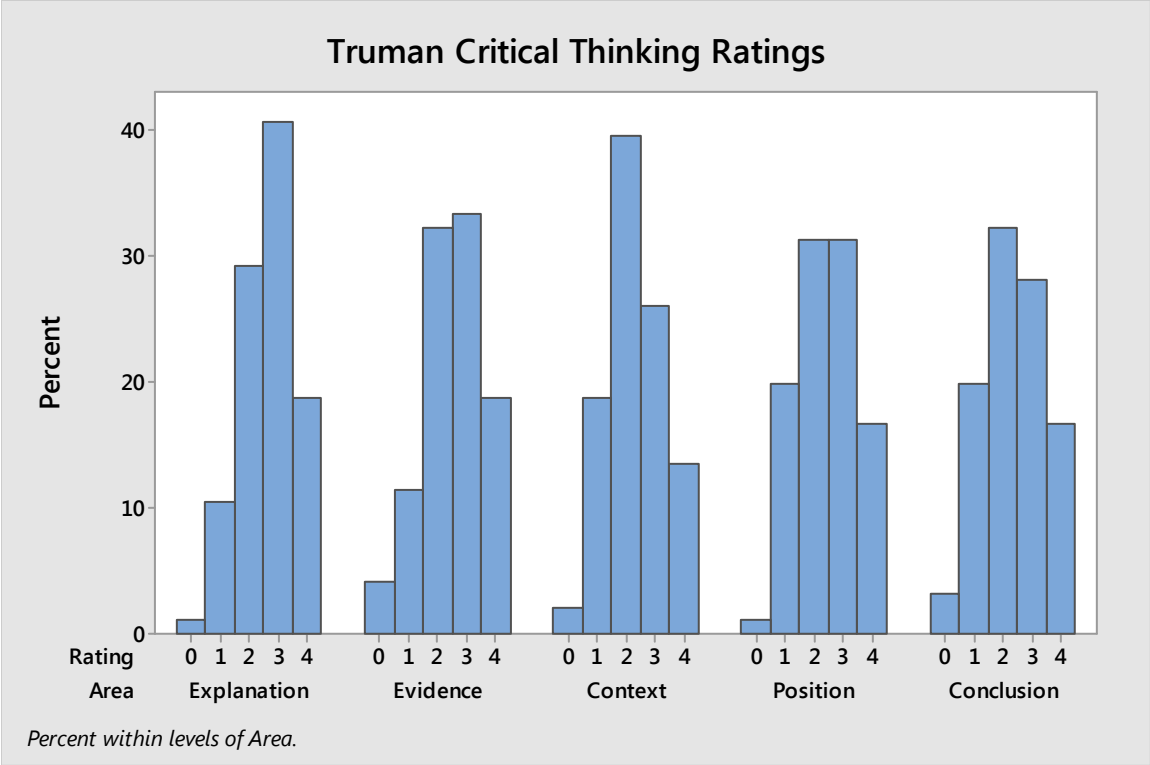


Figure 9 – Breakdown of individual ratings for Truman Critical Thinking sub scores.

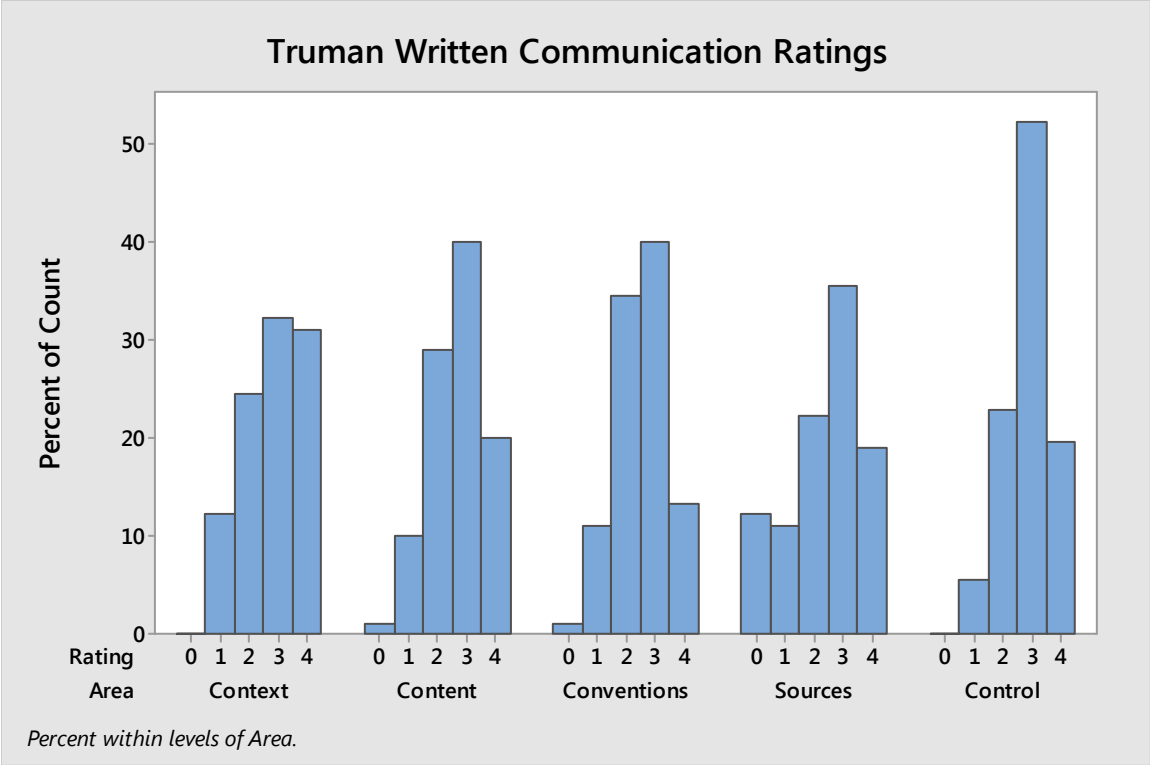


Figure 10 – Breakdown of individual ratings for Truman Written Communication sub scores.