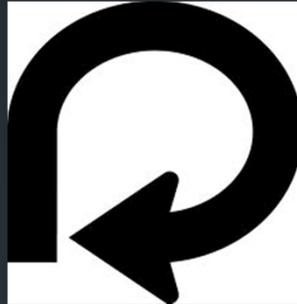


Opening the Loop

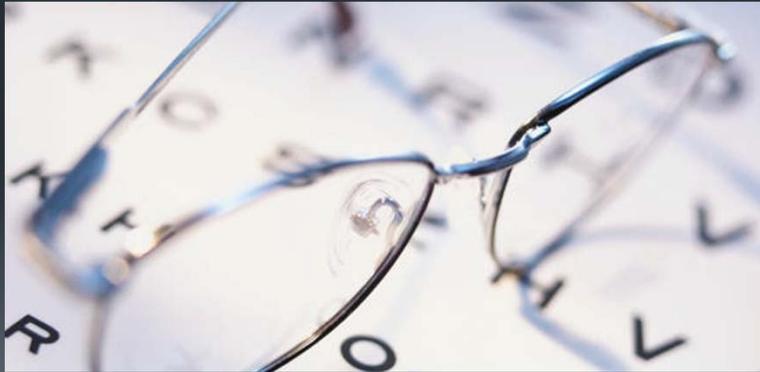


Assessing General Education
Written Communication Outcomes
in a Community College Setting

Writing Across the Curriculum at NCC: An Unfunded Mandate

- By 1991 Writing Intensive courses and requirements were instituted
- The English department drafted “guidelines” for Writing Intensive courses.
- There were no “learning outcomes” nor institution-wide assessment

Middle States Accreditation Self-Study 2004



Writing Across the Curriculum: Driven by the English Department

- In 2003, the English department revised the guidelines to emphasize the use of sources and the writing process.
- In 2005 as part of an overhaul of General Education at NCC, Communication Outcomes were co-written by English and Communications faculty.



Gen Ed Communication Goal

Students will present and support ideas in an organized and coherent manner consistent with the intended audience and purpose in both speaking and writing.



Gen Ed Communication Outcomes

- Students demonstrate critical thinking in collecting, analyzing, understanding, and choosing effective ideas and supporting materials. (Gathering information)

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- Students demonstrate critical thinking in collecting, analyzing, understanding, and choosing effective ideas and supporting materials. (Gathering information)
- Students understand and choose effective communication strategies and organize ideas and information with a clear central idea or thesis. (Organizing information)

Gen Ed Communication Outcomes

- Students demonstrate critical thinking in collecting, analyzing, understanding, and choosing effective ideas and supporting materials. (Gathering information)
- Students understand and choose effective communication strategies and organize ideas and information with a clear central idea or thesis. (Organizing information)
- Students show clear awareness of audience needs in word choice, level of explanation, and method of presentation. (Presenting information)



First Assessment 2008-9

- Few faculty (anecdotally, fewer than 20%) were assigning source-based papers.
- Therefore, we couldn't get a "randomized" sample.
- 55% of the student essays assessed met 2 of the 3 Learning Outcomes at a passable rate



Problem:

- A lack of communication with faculty about what the Writing Intensive guidelines were.
- No institutional process for review

Recommendations

Professional Development for Writing Faculty in the Disciplines

Goals

- Make sure faculty know what the WI guidelines and General Education Outcomes are
- Offer teaching strategies, with emphases on stages of the writing process and use of sources.

In addition

Course outline form revised. WI course outlines must include an explanation of how the course meets the WI guidelines.

“Faculty Development” went in two directions. WAC faculty helped the General Education Core Committee develop a broader idea of what “source based writing” could entail.

2013 Assessment

We wanted to find out

1. Are faculty following the WI Guidelines: are they helping students use the writing process to develop source-based papers?
1. Have student writing skills improved?



A related, unofficial question

Has the English Department generated appropriate guidelines and Student Learning Outcomes?

We did a 2-Tier Assessment

Collected Assignments and 160 student essays from students who completed 36 c. u. or more

Tier 1 *Assignment Assessment*

Did faculty build assignments that would lead students to write source-based, thesis-driven essays?

Tier 2 *Student artifact assessment*

Did students meet learning outcomes?

Tier I: Faculty Assignments

We developed a rubric for assignments, addressing these questions

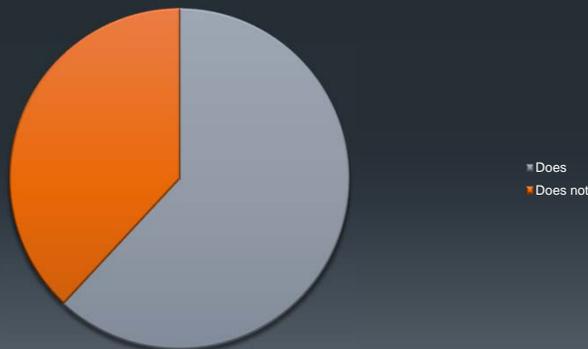
1. Does the nature of the assignment at least “suggest” a main point be developed (i.e. Write an essay comparing two presidents)?
1. Does the nature of the assignment at least *imply* that a student needs to use sources (i.e. “write a research essay)?
2. Are any writing process steps mentioned in the assignment?

Results of Tier 1

We were able to use artifacts from 62% of the assignments.

- 62% (13/21) of assignments at least implied students should develop a main point or argument.
- Only 1 assignment didn't clearly require sources.
- 57% (12/21) mentioned or required writing process steps

38% of assignments would not have led students to develop a main point



What that means

- A. We've made huge in-roads in communicating WI guidelines to faculty, especially regarding use of source (99% of faculty assigned source-based essays this time, vs. 20% last time)

IMPLICATIONS

AND EITHER

- B. Our requirement of thesis-driven essays may be inappropriate for some disciplines (38% of assignments would not prompt a thesis-focused essay)

OR

- C. Faculty need help crafting assignments

FACULTY CONVERSATIONS

1. In a recent round of e-mail conversations, faculty from various disciplines enthusiastically endorsed the three learning outcomes.
2. Faculty who had not had thesis-driven assignments (the 38%) expressed an interest in making assignments clearer or more integrative.
3. Numerous faculty attended a recent seminar on creating clear assignments.

What's Left?

More communication with science and technology faculty.



Questions?

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Tier 2: Artifact Assessment

- How did the students do?

Students were assessed on 6 measures corresponding to the 3 Gen Ed written communication outcomes

- Content (gathering information)
- Use of sources (gathering information)
- Thesis development (organizing information)
- Organization (organizing information)
- Language (presenting to an audience)
- Documentation (presenting to an audience)

	Exemplary 3	Good 2	Inadequate 1	Poor 0
Content (1)	Reflects the complexity of the topic.	May not fully reflect the complexity of the topic	Does not reflect the complexity of the topic.	Oversimplifies the topic.
Use of sources (1)	Appropriate source material effectively supports main idea	Source material generally supports main idea	Some source material may not be appropriate or reliable.	Source material does not support main idea
Central Idea (2)	The main idea is clear and present throughout	The main idea is clear	The main idea may be vague	No main idea
Organization (2)	Progression of supporting ideas is explicit	Minor lapses in organization.	Progression of supporting ideas is unclear	No progression of supporting ideas
Language (3)	Uses engaging language that skillfully communicates meaning with clarity and fluency. Paper is error free	Academically appropriate language makes meaning clear. Few grammatical errors.	Language generally conveys meaning. Several errors.	Language sometimes impedes meaning. Errors become distracting.
Documentation (APA, MLA, Chicago style) (3)	Sources of information are clearly and correctly documented.	Sources of information are correctly documented, but some attribution may be unclear.	Sources of information are documented but perhaps not clearly or correctly.	Some sources of information may not be documented.



How many student papers were assessed?

- 84 papers from students who've earned 36 c.u. or more



What % of students met outcomes well?

- 42%



What percentage of students barely met outcomes?

68%



How many didn't approach meeting outcomes?

■ 32%



Areas of best performance

- Content
- Use of Sources



Areas of poorest performance

- Language
- Organization
- Documentation
- Thesis development