

ESTABLISHING CONSISTENT ASSESSMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION WRITING COURSES

Assessment Institute
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Introducing Ourselves

- Joyce Walsh-Portillo
 - Associate Vice-President, Academic Affairs
 - Founder, General Education Outcomes and Assessment Team
- Greg Lindeblom
 - Lead Faculty, Outcomes and Assessment
 - Faculty, Economics and Business Administration
- Christopher Johnston
 - Faculty, English
 - Member, General Education Outcomes and Assessment Team
 - Chair, Writing Credit Committee

Our Institution: Broward College

- Broward College is a multi-campus commuter state college in Broward County, Florida
 - Three major campuses and seven centers located throughout the county
 - International centers and affiliates in 10 countries
- We offer both Associates level and Baccalaureate level degrees
 - Currently offer 11 bachelor's degrees
- Current student enrollment is over 60,000 students
- [Broward College web site](#)

Presentation Outcomes

At the end of the workshop:

- You will be able to identify the considerations we incorporated in establishing consistency in writing credit course requirements
- You will be able to apply those standards to effective assessment of student writing in General Education writing courses

Overview: Writing at Broward College



- “Gordon Rule”- Florida state law requiring that students pass (with a C or higher) four writing courses in order to earn an A.A or Baccalaureate degree
- Two composition courses: English Comp 1 and 2 (with option of Professional / Technical Writing)
- Two additional “writing credit” courses: not composition courses; courses that are designated “writing credit”

The Challenges Posed

At the State level:

- In both the composition and other courses, students are required to demonstrate college-level writing skills through multiple assignments
- How do we interpret “multiple assignments” as the state law dictates?
- How do we define “college-level writing skills” which the state also requires?

The Challenges Posed

At the College Level

- We have almost 100 writing credit courses representing 12 different academic disciplines
- Strong tradition of academic freedom and departmental / faculty autonomy in determining curriculum
 - active Faculty Senate and Faculty Union
- How, for the purpose of assessment, can we create some level of consistency in college-wide writing given our college's tradition of academic freedom?

Our Response: Writing Credit Committee

Fall 2013

- Writing Credit Committee (WCC) formed to revise writing standards for "writing credit" courses at the College

The Specific Goals

- Standards and criteria for writing credit courses
- Development of college-wide writing rubric
- Recommendation of specific writing assignments
- Offer relevant workshops and seminars



WCC: Our Initial Review

What we found

- Diversity of opinion among faculty as to what constitutes “college-level writing”
- **Very limited direction:** “In all writing-credit courses, students should expect essay tests, in-class writing, and/or formal written presentation of material relevant to the content.”



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WCC: Our Four Standards

To clarify “college-level writing skills” we created **The Four Standards**

1. Writing assignments must require original academic (as opposed to “creative”) writing
2. Writing assignments must require that student writing be on a subject and of a purpose related to the course’s learning outcomes
3. Student writing is assessed by the course instructor in a manner compatible with an A – F grading scale
4. Writing assignments must be a determining factor in the overall grade for the course

WCC Recommendations

- To meet state requirement for multiple writing assignments, we require all writing credit courses to include “three to five writing assignments”
- To encourage the use of rubrics in grading writing, we require that “faculty provide students with written instructions that clearly explain how the writing assignment will be assessed”
 - But we do not specify a college-wide writing rubric
 - We leave development of a rubric to the discipline faculty in each area
- We limited writing credit courses to General Education courses in Humanities and Social/Behavioral Sciences
 - This reduced the number of writing credit courses from 97 to 49

Writing Credit Committee Results

- Endorsed by Faculty Senate, Curriculum Committee, Faculty Union, and Board of Trustees
- New writing credit requirements included in all important college documents
 - Faculty Handbook
 - College Catalog
 - Course Outlines
 - Course Syllabi
- Set the stage for greater consistency in writing credit courses



Impact on Assessment

General Education Competency #2: *Students must write clearly and coherently.*

Writing Credit Courses that assess Gen Ed Competency #2

- PHI 2010 – Introduction to Philosophy
- PHI 2600 – Ethics
- POS 2041 – National Government
- SYG 2000 – Introduction to Sociology
- ECO 2013 – Principles of Macroeconomics
- AMH 2020 – American History: 1877 to 1945

Impact on Assessment

- The implications of this for assessment are significant
- Greater consistency in writing course standards means that we can strive for greater consistency in assessment of student writing across the courses
 - While recognizing that each discipline will establish its own rubric and standard (norm) for assessing student writing

Our Work Continues...

- We strive for greater collaboration between English Composition faculty and those who teach writing credit courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences
 - our goal is to create more continuity in writing standards
- We use assessment results to implement strategies to improve student writing across the college
 - Particular areas of concern are source documentation and critical thinking

Any questions?

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- Thanks very much