

Course-Embedded Assessment of Degree Program Outcomes – June 2018

Program: Composition (English Department)

Date: June 25, 2018

1) Which program outcome did you assess?

The Composition Program in the English Department

2) In which courses was this program outcome assessed?

In both English 12 (Composition 1) and English 24 (Composition 2)

3) How was information gathered?

During the 2017-18 academic year, we followed a similar approach to assessment that we have used in the previous two academic years, having our Course Review Committee members do “classroom-based action research.” This approach was designed to encourage faculty to make their own choices about what they’d like to find out about student learning in their own Eng 12 and 24 classes. This year, however, the CRC decided that all members would focus their research projects on the same inquiry interest: “The effectiveness of different modes of commenting on student writing.”

We once again asked the CRC members to define an “inquiry interest”, or a particular area within “commenting on student writing” they would like to study in a systematic and meaningful way, and then to devise a methodology they felt would be effective in helping them gather the type of data they wanted. We also asked them to find some scholarly articles that might help them frame, contextualize, or otherwise inform their project. At the end of the Fall term, we asked CRC members to provide us with a written description of the entire project, including both the kind of commenting (written, oral, electronic) they researched and they kind of student writing (formal essay, draft, informal work) they look at, along with the method they employed, the scholarly sources they consulted, their findings, and any changes they would make as a result of their classroom-based action research. **See attached document #1.**

This unified (albeit still flexible) focus produced several interesting projects and the findings, while still diverse, were more cohesive and easier to bundle into obvious patterns.

4) Please list the key findings you learned as a result of gathering assessment data:

- **Importance of Conferencing.**

The biggest benefit for students is a combination of conferencing and written feedback (electronically or by hand) with emphasis on the first. Several people said that they found conferencing and follow up on written commenting to be essential. See for example, Gabay & Iantosca and Lavazzi. The “Garrison Method” was mentioned more than once and might be worth having a faculty development session on.

- **Less maybe more when it comes to written comments on essays.**

Sarah found that intervention via line editing was largely unhelpful; Kevin thinks that commenting less might be just as helpful, and several people noted the importance of following up written feedback with face-to-face consult.

- **New technological modes of commenting fared pretty well.**

Emily liked Screen Capture in spite of technical problems; Adele found that students like comments from Turnitin, and Mary Lynn found that students liked comments on Google Docs because they are captured.

- **Several instructors noted the importance of being mindful:**

1) of how complicated writing and commenting is: Meg: We underestimate student responses to comments and Matthew: Things are more complicated than we presume and development of essay requires “patient abiding.”

2) of their own--possibly not so helpful-- tendencies while giving feedback: e.g. the urge to line edit (Sarah), shifts in tone and comment style for students who are weak writers (Kevin and Valerie).

- **Peer review has multiple benefits.**

Karen found that well structured peer review, with built in student reflection encourages students to take ownership of work and the community of classroom, and takes focus off of instructor’s authority. Adele found that half her students like peer review. Jenny found that peer relationships are central to success of classroom experience.

Overview

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Overall, this year’s Fall Research Projects, which asked the CRC to focus on one area of teaching, in this case commenting, produced substantially more cohesive

results. However there are still some glitches in the process that should be addressed:

- 3 members did not produce projects. What should be done when this happens?
- It should be emphasized that these projects ask the CRC member to draw on a scholarly source as they are looking at their class and teaching, and so in this manner to make sure that theory and practice are dialectically positioned. Most people did use sources to great benefit. Their projects were more clearly focused, had more perspective, and produced more helpful findings.

(Please also see column on “findings” in attached document #2).

5) What was the process through which faculty discussed the interpretation and implications of the information gathered?

I presented the overall findings via slide presentation along with the grid (document # 2) detailing individual project results at our final CRC meeting during the last week of classes. The Course Review Committee spent the first half of this two-hour meeting discussing these results.

6) Given the findings, what is the faculty’s plan for instruction next semester?

As per usual, this varied somewhat depending on the instructor and project. (See document #2 column “Upshot.”). Collectively, however, as the CRC turns its focus towards online teaching next year, we are hoping to still layer in this concentration on commenting so as to consider “what are best practices for commenting in an online environment?” We also would like some of the CRC members to present the “Garrison method” they studied and other types of conferencing at a faculty development workshop.

Document #1
Gen Ed assessment project write-up
Fall 2017

“The effectiveness of different modes of commenting on student writing”

Your name(s):

English 12 or 24?

1. For the purposes of this project, how did you define “commenting” and what type of “student writing” did you look at? **In this description, please include any definitions of terms that you feel are necessary for others to understand precisely what you examined.*
2. How did you go about researching your inquiry interest in your class? What was the “method” of your research?
3. What outside scholarly or professional writing did you consult to contextualize this inquiry?
4. What did you find out (about your teaching and/or your students’ learning) via this research?
5. What do you imagine you might do differently in your own teaching practice based on this research?

6. What would you like to share with other Eng 12/24 teachers about your research?

7. Would you like to research this topic further? If so, what would your questions be?

Document # 2

CRC Fall Research Projects Analysis 2017-2018: Commenting on Student Work

Member and Course	Type of Comment	Type of Student Writing	Inquiry/ Interest	Source	Finding	Upshot
Bell 24	Marginal comments	Various drafts of high/medium/low on first (personal narrative) and third (research) essays	Comparison of commentary: Are her comments similar on the different essays?	Stern and Solomon	Comments on personal narrative were more encouraging	Need to take more time composing comments and meeting with students to review comments is important.
Fadem 12 ALP	Feedback form including written comments	Drafts of standard papers	Effectiveness of form for instructor (implied),	none	Instructor time/labor was reduced	Will continue to use and modify form, maybe assigning points.
Feeley 12	Written comments: marginal and global.	Final drafts of 3 failing essays	Examination of how comments are working on failing essays	Onore	Telling a student "See Me" is obstacle to revision; we underestimate student responses to comments	Cross-reading failing essays helps; might help to study student responses to comments.
Gabay and Santosca 24	One-on-one conferencing	Second drafts of essays 1 and 2 of 4-5 students	Efficacy of Garrison Method: mini-study involving cross-reading and comparison of work with and without conference intervention	McGuire Simons	Weak and average students really benefit from conferencing; Strong students were better able to work with written comments alone.	Conferencing is beneficial for students; considering using more class time for it; 4 hours is not enough; would like to do a larger study.

Gartner 12	Written Comments via Google Docs	One student essay	Looking at comments related to paragraphs and development of ideas	Delotto	Development requires the habit of patient abiding or “dwelling”; cursory comments such as “explain” or “develop” are insufficient.	Patient “dwelling” in writing/ thinking/developing of ideas needs to be modeled and practiced. It is more complicated than we presume.
Kolkmeier 12	Written comments	Drafts/essays in 10 student portfolio ranging from no pass to pass.	Reviewed comments for consistency across work for students performing at different levels. Wondering how much commentary is necessary or effective.	Ruegg and Riddell.	Tone of comments changed: More conversational tone for stronger students; more questions and maybe less encouragement for weaker students.	Wonders if he is commenting too much. Would like to try limiting comments (maybe to 5) and see if that influences tone. And awareness of tone shift is important.
Lavazzi 12 Online	Written comments And one-on-one conferences after students reviewed.	Low stakes informal writing and formal in-depth projects online	Evaluating impact of written comments through follow up conferences after students got written feedback	Treglia	Written comments alone are often not adequate to solicit in-dept revision; Directive comments are ineffective.	We should all put more effort into conferencing/ follow up to see if students are metabolizing our feedback. Would be interesting to do a study comparing Garrison method in VR and RL classroom formats.
McQuillan an AIP 12	One-on-one discussion with student	Multiple revisions of thesis statements.	Is practicing multiple versions of thesis using structured guidelines and followed by discussion with instructor effective?	None consulted on commenting. Duxbury and Shafer on thesis mentioned	Multiple findings: ESL students can use help with shifts in word forms; Process used does not help some “Careless” students; structured guidelines for multiple thesis revisions is effective for some students; Some students found the assignment confusing	Hopefully insistence on multiple versions of thesis and having students try many variations, will avoid pitfall of simplistic solutions and formulaic writing,
Navarro	Various styles of	Mostly first	What are ways that	Habits of Mind	Students tended	Would like there to be some

24	comments: written (electronic and print) as marginalia, narrative/letter from, and spoken via one-on-one consult.	and second drafts	various forms of commenting might or might not help?	and Ricour	to prefer one-on-one consult but had different preferences depending on exposure: Exposure to google docs commenting encouraged appreciation for its ease and that it records comments that can be revisited.	shared process for commenting for English 24 instructors and wonders if modes of commenting should be the same or different for students in 12 & 24.
Niles 12	Combination of written and oral peer feedback	Early and later drafts of essays	What is more effective instructor or peer feedback?	Liu and Carless; Berg, Ineke, et al; Hawe and Parr.	Well structured peer review (which builds in student reflection on the process) "lead to greater self monitoring, reflection and more personal investment in writing outcomes."	Peer review has multiples benefits: It encourages students to be more reflective readers, take ownership, experience community. And it "lightens the load" and takes focus off of the instructor's authority.
Schnee 12	Formal feedback using Screen Capture video	First drafts of last two essays	Experiment with video feedback to see how it would go for instructor and for students	Several: Anson, Moore, Sprague, and Ghosn-Chelala	Students encountered technical difficulties, Instructor enjoyed giving feedback this way: videos forced her to focus on "higher order" issues because of time limit; felt more personal and conversational.	Emily will continue to experiment with this; It is not yet clear what students learned or how they benefit from video feedback, but she will create a process to solicit student feedback in future, Will also do more to avoid technical troubles, e.g. provide a doc with directions on troubleshooting and offer a demo of how to use.
Radtke Course ?	Handwritten	Structured in-class reading responses	Are students present, engaged and following course work?	Ambrose: Lang; Hansen	This assignment helps to ascertain skill level of students and how to get them motivated	Relationship is key--between professor and students, and among students.
Rutkowski 12	Written notes and markings addressing mechanical issues: comparison of line	Student papers	Given that correcting grammar is contested in comp, she wanted to know if grammar	Linville	It is hard to resist line editing, but there is no	Line-edits offer no additional guidance to students and simple global commentary may better prepare students to find and

	edits vs. global end comments in 2 classes.		corrections offer any benefit or are a waste of time.		difference between line edited feedback and global comments in final product.	correct their own errors.
Doyle 24	Variety of feedback types: written (by hand or on Turn it in) and peer reviewed live in class.	Student essays	Surveyed students about feedback to find out what they think	Multiple: Ekholm; McGrath; Mory; Ruegg etc.	Multiple findings but overall students appreciated feedback and liked Turn it In in particular; They were less wild about peer review, but still half valued it.	Would like to know more about how students interpret comments and draw on them in their revision process.

Findings:

- **Importance of Conferencing.**

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