

Course-Embedded Assessment of Degree Program Outcomes – July 2019

Program: Composition (English Department)

Date: July 16, 2019

1) Which program outcome did you assess?

This semester, we examined how the three overarching categories of Composition instruction can be mediated through online resources, tools, and modes of instruction.

Writing: We teach that college essay writing is a multi-layered process involving prewriting, writing and revision. We try to build resilience in our students as they learn the values of revising based on instructor and peer feedback as well as sensitive and honest self-review.

Reading: We teach that critical reading is an active and recursive process that involves close reading while annotating, rereading, and meaning making. We aim to foster patience and open-mindedness in our students as they carefully engage a variety of challenging texts.

Information Literacy: We aim for students to gain an introductory experience with research, both as a process for acquiring information and as a means to develop a critical argument. We want students to cultivate a curiosity for information as they begin to understand the various methods of conducting independent research.

This semester, we evaluated, assessed, and experimented with ways to enhance and expand our teaching repertoires in these three categories to include (new) technologies and tech-enhanced pedagogies that enhance student learning, equity, and access.

2) In which course was this program outcome assessed?

In both English 12: Composition I and English 24: Composition II

3) How was information gathered?

During the 2018-2019 academic year, we followed a similar approach to assessment that we have used in previous academic years, by having our

Course Review Committee members conduct “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 teaching and learning with digital technologies in their own Eng 12 and 24 classes.

Faculty began by finding some scholarly articles on teaching and learning with digital technologies. These articles were shared at a CRC meeting as well as on the Composition program website.

Faculty then had the chance to build on this scholarship by trying out some of these digital tools in the classroom and writing up what they had learned. (See Document #1.)

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

It quickly became clear that faculty comfort and facility with using digital tools varied greatly. Some faculty members had never done more than use email in the classroom; on the other end of the spectrum were faculty who had already taught Composition in hybrid and fully online classes.

The findings and experiments were as wide ranging as the faculty’s experience. One faculty member simply used the smartboard to list questions that would ordinarily be written on a handout. This small change allowed him to reveal the questions slowly over the course of the class. Another faculty member tried out new features of screen-capture for commenting on student essays. The only common theme among projects is that faculty all experimented with something new.

While Document #2 lists individual faculty findings, some key conclusions and considerations for future study can be drawn from the body of research:

- Most projects, no matter what their focus, emphasized the idea that student collaboration results in more meaningful learning.
- Some faculty experimented with specific areas of digital teaching and learning while other groups explored loosely related tools.

It might be useful for future groups to identify a specific tool to explore, for example, Yuja for video commenting or Zoom for conferencing. There’s a learning curve to adapting or experimenting with new strategies, and the process could be made easier if people learn with a supportive group also

using it for the first time.

- Many instructors looked at using multimodal teaching strategies (for example, audio texts or digital files) in order to enhance their classrooms. These tools can be effectively incorporated in both face-to-face and online classrooms, but they will be essential in developing online learning environments that are interactive and engaging.
- Significantly, despite the wide range of expertise, everyone came away with more questions than answers for how to adapt digital technologies in the composition classroom.

Questions faculty research suggests for further consideration and exploration:

For the administration:

What improvements can realistically be made to the Blackboard course environment to ensure they can be accessed on mobile platforms?

How can instructors help students navigate Blackboard when not all the components are available on different platforms?

How can faculty be made more aware and informed of technological developments throughout CUNY in order to enhance our students' learning?

Can we develop interfaces more suited to CUNY students' needs and lobby for a move away from required course management systems?

How can we minimize attrition based on technological vulnerabilities, time constraints and digital disruptions?

Specific tools that might require faculty development:

How can we incorporate video conferencing technologies like Skype, Screencast, and Zoom to maintain the subtlety of face-to-face instruction? What support will we need from the administration in order to effectively incorporate these tools?

Which under-utilized Blackboard tools would encourage student participation and engagement?

What online resources, tools, and templates already exist that we could use as launching points for our own ideas and classes?

What digital tools (i.e./for annotating) are available to help support students' digital reading? How can we incorporate Evernote and Good Reader in the online teaching environment?

Pedagogical considerations:

How can we help students transition their current digital skill sets into online, academic learning environments? How can we put students' greater understanding of certain digital platforms to use in online learning environments?

What kinds of modeling assignments are necessary as we move into new modes of engagement? Even if students are digitally savvy, for instance, they need help processing audio feedback.

How can we make online and hybrid course components more responsive to students' unique needs?

Are there low-cost ways to access audio versions of texts for online/hybrid classes to make the remote context more dynamic?

How can we ensure that the online teaching environments present information clearly and are practical, interactive environments for learning?

Meeting faculty needs:

How can we create clear boundaries when the digital teaching medium threatens to collapse the borders between work and personal time and space?

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

In the final CRC meeting of the Fall 2018 semester, faculty shared what their Research Projects suggested about teaching with technology and teaching and learning online. The general findings were shared at the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester and faculty formed interest groups to informally continue their investigations. Faculty had a final chance to reflect on what they learned with a

digital survey on this year's digital teaching and learning experiments, in particular, the extent to which they achieved the goal articulated by the CRC last year:

To expand our teaching repertoires to include (new) technologies and tech-enhanced pedagogies that enhance student learning, equity, and access.

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

Faculty will continue to experiment with these tools and discuss them within the CRC and in the department as a whole. To that end, these discussions all informed the CRC's Tier 1 "Online Writing Instruction" document, which outlines best practices for online writing instruction. The CRC voted unanimously on this document and, hopefully, will have a chance to present it to the English department in the 2019-2020 academic year.

**Document #1
Fall Research Project Write-Up
Fall 2018
Experimenting with Technology & Learning in Eng 12/24**

Your name:

Which course did you teach and study this term? (12 or 24):

1. What were you trying to find out or study in this Fall Research Project? Please indicate which platforms/modalities/technologies were involved in your study.
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 does your Fall Research Project suggest to you about teaching with technology/teaching & learning online? Feel free to describe more than one conclusion you reached!

Document # 2

CRC Fall Research Projects Analysis 2018-2019
Teaching and Learning with Digital Tools

Fall Research Projects 2018

	Inquiry/Interest	Method	Sources	Finding	Upshot
Armstrong 12	Condensing the time it takes to present reading prompt questions via Blackboard during class time.	Comparing the use of paper prompts to electronically presented prompts.	Curry and Cook Carbone	While the research explores how online learning can decenter the classroom away from the instructor, it ignores KCC students' knowledge gaps that demand faculty intervention.	Some f2f classroom strategies work so well that it can seem superfluous to incorporate digital teaching tools. Concern with digital teaching: "The instructor's personal time and space becomes co-opted as a work space even more than it is already."
Bell 24	Comparing methods of essay feedback: handwritten notes and conferences vs. online comments on Google docs	Both forms of evaluation were used and students were surveyed for their feedback	Stern and Solomon Goldrick-Rab and Stommel	Although students submit work late, they do have access to computers and printers. Students prefer handwritten notes/ in-class conferences to digital feedback, though it was easy to submit	Online teaching would be best when combined with face-to-face instruction. Consider merging a program like Skype into fully online classes.

				assignments via google docs.	
Beveridge 24	<p>Assessing feedback for online students</p> <p>Investigating student engagement and instructor presence</p> <p>Observing students' literacy practices</p>	<p>Surveys, reflections, assignment assessment, zoom recorded instruction</p>	Meyer	<p>Instructors must pay close attention to student engagement in both online and f2f classes.</p> <p>Social engagement among students promotes participation in online classes.</p> <p>Instructor-student bonds were strengthened by online communication tools</p>	<p>Multimedia instruction improves student engagement.</p> <p>Technological tools can motivate students' interest and participation.</p>
Gabay 24	<p>Comparing the difference between students' print and digital reading comprehension.</p>	<p>Assigned print and digital texts and compared their comprehension on quizzes</p> <p>Analyzed responses to reading survey.</p>	Reardon	<p>Students more likely to read and annotate printed text than online text,</p> <p>Proficient readers did about the same on both, while weaker readers did markedly better with print texts. .</p>	<p>Will still assign digital texts, but with more support to make this kind of reading productive.</p> <p>"Digital reading needs to be supported by tools that allow for deep intentional and deliberate reading."</p> <p>Students now straddle the digital and print media, but have more experience with print.</p>
Gartner 12	<p>Using Google docs and drive folders for sharing all course work and instructor feedback.</p>	<p>Analyzed the effectiveness of using Google docs/drive for submission of assignments</p>	<p>Pecorino</p> <p>Bray</p>	<p>"Google provided a more welcoming, interactive, dynamic, open, flexible, fun, and intuitive platform for our work than the reliable but uninspiring and often cumbersome Blackboard"</p>	<p>Faculty should be involved with academic technology developments throughout CUNY to help inform teaching practices.</p>

		nts, assignment feedback, and collaboration.			
Iancosta WC	Investigating how online texts help invite students to participate in knowledge production.	Conducted literature review of the history of literacy technologies	Vlieghe	<p>“Knowledge is produced collaboratively and collectively can give our students new understandings of their place in the academy.”</p> <p>Digital texts may empower students since, unlike a book, the digital text is “unfinished and open to revision, continuation, elaboration, and collaborative altering”</p>	<p>“Technological innovations definitively alter texts and readers”</p> <p>Digital environments can make self-directed learning possible.</p>
Kolkmeier College Now	Finding updated platform for College Now materials.	Working with CN faculty and staff to redesign website	Unal and Unal	Still working on how to make the site user friendly for faculty and students	Need to investigate how to make the website a place for presenting practical information AND an active, well-utilized location for sharing teaching materials and student work.
Lavazzi 12 ALP	Applying AI systems to commenting and evaluating students’ writing and reading.	Comparing current writing feedback and close reading instruction to those in AI systems	McNamara et al Burstein Manzo	<p>AI can complement human instruction, beyond checking grammar</p> <p>There is a feedback loop between AI and human instruction: “AI programs abstract and formalize certain common classroom and evaluation procedures, becoming a sort of (distorting) mirror through which we can</p>	Confirms McNamara et al’s idea of “deliberative practice” which includes “sustained and focused (re)thinking and (re)writing as a gradual process involving persistent probing” AND the value of creative, nonlinear strategies to complement AI’s focus on “to-the-point” practice.” AI programs

				learn about our own practices.”	show either inadequate on its own.
McQuillan 12 ALP	Examining the effectiveness of multi-modal learning	Using online tools, like clip art, videos, and maps, to help enhance students’ college-level writing skills.	Yancey	Images can “supplement and enrich” essays, encourage ownership of writing, and encourage them to develop ideas.	Just one or two extra dimensions used with “precision and patience” can help enhance students’ work over a range of courses.
Navarro 24	Teaching reading/writing in fully online courses	Reading articles/ Investigating resources at other colleges	Lyons and Tappeiner	Realized it is not necessary to “reinvent the wheel” as a lot of resources already exist.	“We need to collaborate more with professionals in our field who have resources and who are continually developing new modalities.”
Oliveri 24	Investigating how students use “Discussion Questions” on Blackboard and how these responses transfer to the f2f classroom.	Analyzing the answers to Discussion Board questions.	Tyler and Castek Yu, et al.	Online assignments need to be in place from the beginning of the term for students to take them seriously.	1- Begin online assignments early in the term. 2- Use online responses in the f2f classroom. 3- Grade online assignments.
Rutkowski	Investigating	Survey	Rugowsky	Students universally	While research, student

12	the extent online audio recordings of assigned readings improve reading comprehension and/or classroom discussion.	students about their experience with audio texts.	Wagar	responded positively to the inclusion of audio, citing deeper comprehension and greater engagement	experience, and instructor observation supports the usefulness of audio, improvement may also be attributable to multiple readings.
Schnee 12 ALP	Exploring whether students prefer written feedback or screen capture video feedback on essays	Students were assessed with written comments and video feedback and then surveyed about their experiences.	Anson McCarthy Moore and Filling Sprague	Both native and non-native speakers prefer video feedback to written feedback. The method is effective, "even with the students who did not prefer it, precisely because it demanded that they take greater responsibility for using the feedback they were receiving."	1-Continue to vary feedback modes. 2- Speak more slowly in videos 3- Model how to use feedback.
Washington 12 and 24	Analyzing student engagement using Discussion Board Investigating how to incorporate the Discussion Board in the f2f classroom	Analyzed DB responses in three sections of Eng 12	Frank Yu et al	Students take assignments they must hand in more seriously than online assignments. DB should be set up early in the term to promote engagement and community.	Students have a hard time transitioning their skill set in an academic setting. Don't take student knowledge for granted.
Weinstein	Observing	Use BB	Bauer	DB might just be "too	1- Use quarterly deadlines

12	<p>the participation in online discussion forums</p> <p>Investigate whether online participation increased and attention to feedback improved when students saw their work in the online forums.</p>	<p>not just to review classroom material, but also to reinforce the comments given on individual essays.</p>		<p>diffuse a requirement.”</p>	<p>instead of weekly ones to manage grading workload</p> <p>2- Making Discussion boards optional</p> <p>3- Try audio feedback in the future.</p>
Weiss 12	<p>How to improve access for students facing connectivity, hardware, and software problems</p>	<p>Informal interviews with students, both in and out of her section of English 12</p>	<p>Cottom Goldrick-Rab Gonzales, et al.</p>	<p>Many students who fail or drop out of online and hybrid courses do so because of a combination of time constraints and technology maintenance disruptions</p>	<p>1- Blackboard courses need to be redesigned to account for the many flaws in the mobile version of the app, including being mindful of adapting content for small phone screens,</p> <p>2-Faculty can encourage frequent brief posts over longer ones,</p> <p>3- We must lobby to “move away from proprietary “learning Management Systems” toward developing interfaces more genuinely suited to CUNY’s unique needs.</p>
Zipper 12	<p>Investigating the difference between digital and handwritten comments.</p>	<p>Comparing revisions of drafts with either digital or handwritt</p>	<p>Spiker</p>	<p>Digital feedback is superior because it promotes conversation between the instructor and the student and is cleaner.</p>	<p>Though many students will benefit from online learning, many will still need the f2f environment.</p>

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