

Course Level Assessment

English Composition I – ENL 101

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the methodology and findings for the course level assessment of English Composition I (ENL 101). English Composition I serves as an introduction to basic composition. The major thrust is directed toward achieving competency in different rhetorical modes and providing elementary writing skills that serve as a foundation for higher level English courses or other college level courses requiring basic composition skills. To assure that English Composition I is meeting its intended purpose in the curriculum and that students are in fact achieving the defined course learning outcomes identified on the Master Course Record Form (See Attachment A), this course was selected for a course level assessment project to discern attainment of specified learning outcomes across multiple class sections. All instructors of English Composition I provided input as to which course outcomes and measurements to include in this assessment.

Methodology

English Composition I course outcomes will be assessed on a cyclical basis over three years beginning with the fall 2008 semester. Each year, a minimum of four course learning outcomes will be selected for evaluation. Dependent upon assessment findings, some outcomes will be assessed over multiple years to validate effectiveness of changes in curriculum or course materials. A grading rubric (See Attachment C) addressing the target learning outcomes served as an indicator of student achievement of course learning outcomes. The grading rubric was incorporated across this section of ENL 101 during the assessment cycle. The minimum performance standard is set at 80%. At least 80% of the students must meet the minimum acceptable level of “C” provided by the grading rubric. In the event that the minimum performance standard is not met, the unmet learning outcome will be targeted for further monitoring. The results may also trigger an evaluation of course materials supporting the learning outcome, revision of course materials or further curriculum revision.

In the fall 2007 semester, four course learning outcomes were selected for assessment in one section of English Composition I. The target learning outcomes include:

- Outcome 1: Develop a clear, concise thesis
- Outcome 2: Write effective paragraphs
- Outcome 3: Use supportive statements
- Outcome 4: Write sophisticated sentences

To assess these learning outcomes, final research papers were analyzed in one section of English Composition I. All students enrolled in this section completed a research paper and the target learning outcomes were assessed on a grading rubric. Thirteen students were included in this sample. The outcomes and corresponding indicators are listed in Figure 1. Results were compiled for each indicator denoting the percent of students meeting or exceeding the grading rubric for each indicator. Findings from the data for each outcome are presented in the results section of this report.

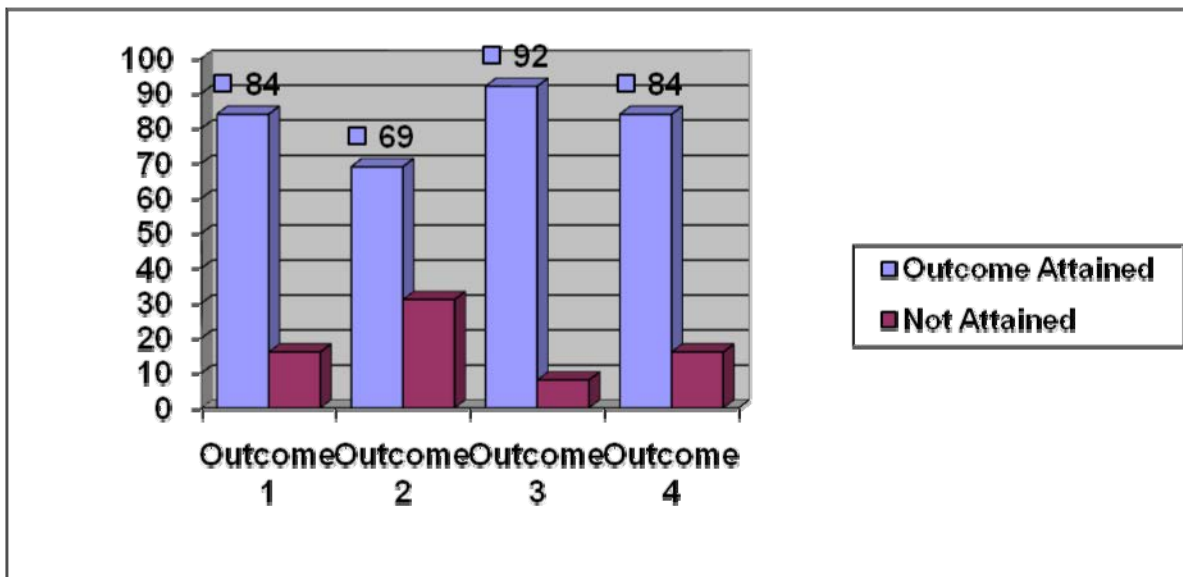
Learning Outcome	Indicator
Outcome 1: Develop a clear, concise thesis	Grading Rubric: Essay controlled by a clear, precise, well-defined thesis; sophisticated in both statement and insight
Outcome 2: Write effective paragraphs	Grading Rubric: Arrangement of paragraphs seems particularly apt; contains clear and smooth transitions; subtopic sentences support the subject and opinion contained in the topic sentence
Outcome 3: Use supportive statements	Grading Rubric: Essay contains well-chosen examples; persuasive reasoning used to develop and support thesis consistently; uses quotations and citations effectively; casual connections between ideas are evident
Outcome 4: Write sophisticated sentences	Grading Rubric: Essay uses compound and complex sentences effectively; usually chooses words aptly; uses complete sentences

Figure 1: Assessed Outcomes and Indicators

Results

Based on the existing data, three of the four learning outcomes were met at the minimum performance standard (See Table 1). Eighty-four percent of the students successfully completed the identified indicator for Learning Outcome 1 (Developing a clear, concise thesis). Ninety-two percent of the students successfully completed the identified indicator for Learning Outcome 3 (Use supportive statements). Eighty-four percent of the students successfully completed the identified indicator for Learning Outcome 4 (Writing sophisticated sentences). Learning Outcome 2 (Write effective paragraphs: 69%) failed to meet the minimum performance standard established for the assessment activity.

Table 1: Distribution of Performance Standards for Outcomes 1 Through 4



Outcome 1: Develop a clear, concise thesis

A grading rubric analyzing a final research paper covered this outcome (Figure 1). The percentage of correct responses was 84% which is above the desired 80% attainment level. While the correct responses for this outcome was met in this assessment, this outcome will require further study to determine if the desired results are sustained in future courses.

Outcome 2: Write effective paragraphs

A grading rubric analyzing a final research paper covered this outcome (Figure 1). The percentage of correct responses was 69% which is below the desired 80% attainment level. The reason for this outcome not being met is the fact that some of the research papers contained awkward transitions and underdeveloped paragraphs.

Outcome 3: Use supportive statements

A grading rubric analyzing a final research paper covered this outcome (Figure 1). The percentage of correct responses was 92% which is above the desired 80% attainment level. While the correct responses for this outcome was met in this assessment, this outcome will require further study to determine if the desired results are sustained in future courses.

Outcome 4: Write sophisticated sentences

A grading rubric analyzing a final research paper covered this outcome (Figure 1). The percentage of correct responses was 84% which is below the desired 80% attainment level. Again, while the correct responses for this outcome was met in this assessment, this outcome will require further study to determine if the desired results are sustained in future courses.

Conclusion and Action Plan

In conclusion, this course level assessment of English Composition I finds that three of the four outcomes are being met at the minimum performance standard of 80%. Outcome 1 (Develop a clear, concise thesis), Outcome 3 (Use supportive statements), and Outcome 4 (Write sophisticated sentences)

did meet the minimum performance standard in this course. These outcomes will continue to be examined in upcoming course assessment to ensure the proper emphasis will be maintained.

Of main concern is Outcome 2 (Write effective paragraphs) in which 69% of the students answered the question correctly. Since constructing an effective paragraph is crucial to writing well, the low performance on this outcome will be addressed. Classroom instruction in this course will need to address the use of effective transitional words and make sure subtopic sentences always contain the subject and opinion stated in the topic sentence. Also, the grading rubric used in this course level assessment will be implemented across the English curriculum so that students and instructors can internalize category standards and share the same goals in writing and grading essays.

The participating faculty members have been made aware of the course level assessment and attainment of the outcomes for the classes they taught. Their continued input as to which outcomes to monitor will be utilized in future course level assessments. This final report is distributed to all developmental English faculty members. Any suggestions or comments from the faculty members will also be considered for any possible changes to the course to increase the attainment level of the outcomes.

**Attachment A:
Master Course Record Form for ENL 101 English Composition I**

Course Prefix and Number: ENL 101
Course Title: English Composition I
Recommended Transcript Title (if over 40 characters) English Comp I
Date Approved/Revised: June 30, 2005
Credit Hours: 3 Contact hours per week (Based on 15 week term): Lecture: 3 Lab:
Prerequisite: RDG 090, ENL 099 OR minimum acceptable test scores for placement in college-level English. Corequisite: Pre/Corequisite:
Grading Mode: Letter
Catalog Description: An introduction to basic composition. The major thrust is directed toward achieving competency in writing a composition.

Course Outcomes:

1. present organized details
2. attend library orientation
3. recognize independent clauses
4. recognize dependent clauses
5. recognize common nouns
6. recognize colon usage
7. recognize proper nouns
8. read assigned readings
9. recognize semicolon usage
10. perform research activities
11. participate in class discussion
12. maintain point of view
13. increase vocabulary
14. find periodical index
15. eliminate second person
16. avoid dangling modifiers
17. avoid comma splices
18. recognize active verbs
19. use relevant details
20. write effective paragraphs
21. write conclusions
22. write complete sentences
23. write clear thesis statements
24. write appropriate conclusions
25. use supportive statements
26. recognize passive verbs
27. use specific words
28. write summaries
29. use pronoun/antecedent agreement
30. use page numbering
31. use MLA/APA
32. use electronic sources
33. use dictionary
34. use correct spelling
35. use correct punctuation
36. use correct capitalization
37. use subject/verb agreement

Implementation Cycle: Fall/Spring Semesters**Role in College Curriculum: (Check all that apply)**

- General Education Core:** Oral & Written Communication
- Technical Core (Specify Program)**
- Restricted Elective (Specify Program)**
- General Elective**

Course Fee: None

Instructor's Qualifications: Master's Degree plus 18 graduate level English credits.

Expanded Course Description (provides details regarding major course concepts, target audience, delivery format, etc)

The student will study the mechanics of English including, but not limited to, clauses, parts of speech, punctuation, and capitalization in order to prepare for and experience many writing exercises. Essays for this class will focus on the students' world and what they are familiar with and have been exposed to. No researching is required for any essay. Students will be introduced to MLA and APA citing styles and will practice them in class, but outside resources will not be required in ENL 101.

Prepared by: Debra H. Backus

**Attachment B:
Summary of Outcomes, Indicators, Performance Standards and Results**

Course Level Assessment: Fall 2007 Reading/Study Skills – RDG 090				
Learning Outcome	Indicator	Percent of Correct Responses	Percent of Incorrect Responses	Performance Standard Met (80%)
Outcome 1: Develop a clear, concise thesis	Grading Rubric: Essay controlled by a clear, precise, well-defined thesis; sophisticated in both statement and insight	84% (11)	16% (2)	Yes
Outcome 2: Write effective paragraphs	Grading Rubric: Arrangement of paragraphs seems particularly apt; contains clear and smooth transitions; subtopic sentences support the subject and opinion contained in the topic sentence	69% (9)	13% (4)	No
Outcome 3: Use supportive statements	Grading Rubric: Essay contains well-chosen examples; persuasive reasoning used to develop and support thesis consistently; uses quotations and citations effectively; casual connections between ideas are evident	92% (12)	25% (1)	Yes
Outcome 4: Write sophisticated sentences	Grading Rubric: Essay uses compound and complex sentences effectively; usually chooses words aptly; uses complete sentences	84% (11)	16% (2)	Yes

**Attachment C:
Grading Rubric**

Grading Rubric

I offer the following grading rubric (only slightly altered) because it serves as a good explanation of how most teachers, myself included, go about establishing a grade for a paper or for a full-length exam response. I *don't* plan to apply this standard mechanically, but if you internalize the category standards set forth for "A" papers, you will be writing with much the same goals in mind as teachers generally have when they put grade to paper.

Letter Grades	Conceptual	Thesis	Development and Support	Structuring	Language
A	offers cogent analysis, shows command of interpretive and conceptual tasks required by assignment and course materials; ideas original, often insightful, going beyond ideas discussed in lecture and class	essay controlled by clear, precise, well-defined thesis: is sophisticated in both statement and insight	well-chosen examples; persuasive reasoning used to develop and support thesis consistently: uses quotations and citations effectively; causal connections between ideas are evident	appropriate, clear and smooth transitions; arrangement of paragraphs seems particularly apt	uses sophisticated sentences effectively; usually chooses words aptly; observes conventions of written English and manuscript format; makes few minor or technical errors
B	shows a good understanding of the texts, ideas and methods of the assignment; goes beyond the obvious; may contain one minor factual or conceptual inconsistency	clear, specific, argumentative thesis central to the essay; may have left minor terms undefined	pursues thesis consistently: develops a main argument with clear major points and appropriate textual evidence and supporting detail; makes an effort to organize paragraphs topically	distinct units of thought in paragraphs controlled by specific and detailed topic sentences; clear transitions between developed, cohering, and logically arranged paragraphs that are internally cohesive	some mechanical difficulties or stylistic problems; may make occasional problematic word choices or awkward syntax errors; a few spelling or punctuation errors or cliché; usually presents quotations effectively
C	shows an understanding of the basic ideas and information involved in the assignment; may contain some factual, interpretive, or conceptual errors	general thesis or controlling idea; may not define several central terms	only partially develops the argument; shallow analysis; some ideas and generalizations undeveloped or unsupported; makes limited use of textual evidence; fails to integrate quotations appropriately	some awkward transitions; some brief, weakly unified or undeveloped paragraphs; arrangement may not appear entirely natural; contains extraneous information	more frequent wordiness; several unclear or awkward sentences; imprecise use of words or over-reliance on passive voice; one or two major grammatical errors (subject-verb agreement, comma splice, etc.); effort to present quotations accurately

Letter Grades	Conceptual	Thesis	Development and Support	Structuring	Language
D	shows inadequate command of course materials or contains significant factual and conceptual errors; does not respond directly to the demands of the assignment; confuses some significant ideas	thesis vague or not central to argument; central terms not defined	frequently only narrates; digresses from one topic to another without developing ideas or terms; makes insufficient or awkward use of textual evidence	simplistic, tends to narrate or merely summarize; wanders from one topic to another; illogical arrangement of ideas	some major grammatical or proofreading errors (subject-verb agreement; sentence fragments); language marred by clichés, colloquialisms, repeated inexact word choices; inappropriate quotations or citations format
F	writer has not understood lectures, readings, discussion, or assignment	no discernible thesis	little or no development; may list facts or misinformation; uses no quotations or fails to cite sources or plagiarizes	no transitions; incoherent paragraphs; suggests poor planning or no serious revision	numerous grammatical errors and stylistic problems seriously distract from the argument