

Foundation Written Communication Assessment Project Results

Report format based on the Assessment Office's "Results Template."

Department/Program and Degree:	Foundations Written Communication (Department of English and the English Language Institute)
Assessment Project Name:	Information Literacy—SLO #3
Semester/Yr Data Collected:	Spring 2009
Assessment Team:	Erica Clayton, Mark Heberle, Monica Stitt-Bergh, Marlene Lowe
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Date submitted:	October 14, 2009 (revised January 2010)

Executive Summary:

A faculty team scored 86 (about 10%) student texts that Spring 2009 instructors of FW sections had submitted for the purpose of program assessment. A review of the texts suggests that 54% of the authors were prepared for future writing tasks: these authors supported each claim that needed backing with source material that was relevant and credible, and the author generally followed a style guide's rules for referencing. However, there is room for improvement given that only 6% were deemed "well prepared" and 21% were considered "not prepared" for future writing tasks involving outside sources.

The English Department Assessment Committee discussed the results and the similarities between SLO #3 and SLO #4. Because of the results and the overlap between SLO #3 and #4, the Assessment Committee decided to combine the two SLOs into one and (re)assess information literacy in spring 2010.

OUTCOME(S) ASSESSED:

SLO #3: Students will be able to compose a text that makes use of source material that is relevant and credible and that is integrated in accordance with an appropriate style guide.

1. Assessment Question(s) and/or Goal(s) of Assessment Activity

What did the program want to find out?

How well are students achieving the outcome? To what extent do students

- a) supply an outside source when needed;
- b) select germane source material;
- c) select source materials from authoritative and/or appropriate sources—e.g. experts, reviewed by experts, appropriate popular material, etc.; and
- d) follow rules for citing source material within the text and for creating a bibliography/works cited/reference list.

2. Method(s) to Gather Evidence

Instructors teaching FW sections submitted copies of their students’ research essays/reports to the English Department.

3. Method to Evaluate

Faculty team (including graduate teaching assistants) applied a rubric (see appendix). Rubric created by the Assessment Committee and later modified by the Assessment Team.

4. Program Size & Sampling Technique

Program size=1,600 students annually complete the FW course
Sample size=80 essays plus 6 training essays
Random stratified sampling (stratified by section)

5. Criteria for Success

Because this is the first assessment of the SLO, the results will be used as baseline data.

6. Results

% of Students	Level of preparation for future writing tasks involving outside sources
6%	Well prepared
48%	Prepared
26%	Partially prepared
21%	Not prepared

See appendix for a breakdown of the results by dimension scored.

7. Met/Not met (the criteria for success)

The faculty has not yet set criteria for success; these results will be used as baseline data.

8. Conclusions and Discoveries

Overall, the faculty team who scored the texts were disappointed in the quality of the student work in regards to information literacy. With only 6% of the students scoring in the “well prepared” category, there is room for improvement, especially considering that 26% were only partially prepared and 21% were evaluated as “not prepared.”

Comments from the scorers:

- Poor use of sources may be a result of poor assignment guidelines; reading the texts revealed the importance of a good assignment. For example, guidelines that explicitly address the information literacy outcome and include a sequence of steps for students to follow.
- Students need practice; one research assignment may be insufficient; better to have students deal with and use sources throughout the semester
- A scaffolding of research activities to guide information literacy learning appears necessary. (Example: an annotated bibliography as part of a research paper assignment appears to be one useful scaffolding activity)
- Most students used sources to support a fact or a summary. Very few, if any, students took issue with a source, used a source as a rhetorical device, or used a source to bring up a controversial point
- A personal essay can incorporate sources, but how to accomplish that must be taught to the students. Sources in many of the personal essays seemed “forced”—included only because the assignment presumably required a minimum number. The sources were often irrelevant.
- Students need more practice using signal phrases to introduce sources
- A good strategy is to assign a research paper that is driven by an important question
- Some of the submitted texts were reminiscent of “high school book reports” in that they primarily summarized known facts

The Assessment Committee, after reviewing the results and the SLOs, determined that SLO #3 and #4 overlap. The committee members suggested combining them and then re(assessing) information literacy in spring 2010. Assessing information literacy again could also provide more insights into student skill levels and ways to improve.

9. Distribution and Discussion of Results

- a) Who distributed the results and who received results?*
- b) How did the distribution take place?*
- c) How and when did the discussion of the results take place?*

The English Dept. Assessment Committee and the Assessment Office discussed the results and the overlap between SLO #3 and #4 at several fall 2009 meetings. The English Department chairperson presented the results at a December 2009 faculty meeting and faculty discussed proposed modifications to the SLOs.

10. Use of Results/Program Modifications

The SLO #3 and #4 will be combined because they overlap. The English Department will assess information literacy again in spring 2010.

11. Assessment Modifications

Collection and scoring went well. Students' information literacy skills will be assessed again in spring 2010 because the SLO #3 results were below expectations and because SLO #3 and #4 will be combined.

12. Other Important Information

None at this time.

APPENDIX A: RUBRIC & EXPLANATORY NOTES

Foundations—Written Communication (FW)

Student Learning Outcome #3: Information Literacy

“Students will be able to compose a text that makes use of source material that is relevant and credible and that is integrated in accordance with an appropriate style guide.”¹

Rubric

	1 – Not Meeting	2 - Approaching	3 – Adequate	4 – Exceeding
A. Makes Use of Source Material	No source material supports claims that need backing.	Some source material supports claims that need backing.	For the most part, source material supports each claim that needs backing	Source material consistently supports each claim that needs backing.
B. Relevancy of Sources	Source material, if incorporated, is not relevant.	Source material is somewhat relevant.	Source material is adequate in terms of relevance.	Source material is obviously relevant.
C. Credibility of Sources	Source material, if incorporated, is not credible.	Source material is somewhat credible.	Source material is adequate in terms of credibility.	Source material is obviously appropriate and credible.
D. Style Integration	A style guide’s rules for referencing outside sources are rarely, if at all, followed.	A style guide’s rules for referencing outside sources are inconsistently followed.	A style guide’s rules for referencing outside sources are generally followed.	A style guide’s rules for referencing outside sources are almost always followed.

¹ The Assessment Committee has altered the language of the original SLO. We substituted the word “reliable” with the word “credible” because it came to our attention during the pilot testing of the rubric that we may not be able to determine how “reliable” a source is outside of the context of the instructors’ classes and discussions between instructors and their students. We believe that outside assessors would be better able to determine whether a source is credible. For example, if a source is from a refereed journal it is likely to be credible, but outside the context of the class, the instructors’ prompts, and their instruction to students, outside assessors may not be able to determine if the particular source is, in fact, reliable for the purposes of a particular student’s argument or thesis.

Explanatory Notes for Information Literacy Rubric (SLO #3)

A. Makes Use of Source Material

Did the student know when an outside source is needed?

It is not possible to stipulate a predetermined number of sources needed. Therefore, assessors will determine how appropriate the amount of source material presented is based on the context of each individual essay.

B. Relevance of Sources

Did the student select specific source material that is germane?

A “1” or “2” score may indicate that the source material (e.g., quote, statistic) is on-topic but does not directly support the claim(s).

C. Credibility of Sources

Did the student select source material from authoritative sources—e.g., experts, reviewed by experts, etc.

A wide variety of sources may be deemed credible. While the *Journal of the American Medical Association* might be appropriate to a particular argument, an article from *Maxim Magazine*, or other popular publication, or a personal interview may be credible.

D. Style Integration

Did the student follow rules for citing source material within the text and also for creating a bibliography/works cited/reference list.

When assessors are not familiar with the style guide used, they should look for internal consistency in the text.

Other

It is important that assessors examine each essay for the aforementioned categories separately. For example, the Assessment Committee found that some students incorporated a good amount of relevant and credible sources in their essays, without correctly crediting them. Thus, a student might receive a high score for “Relevance” and “Credibility,” and a low score for “Style Integration.”

If the student does not explicitly refer to an author/person, title, type (e.g., website, book, newspaper) of the source material, the assessor should assume that the ideas and statistics are the student’s.

When an assessor gives a text a score of “1” in the “Makes Use of Sources” category because no source materials are named, it will be impossible for any other category to receive a score. The other categories should then receive “0” scores.

APPENDIX B: RESULTS

Foundations Written Communication Assessment

Student Learning Outcome #3: Information Literacy

“Students will be able to compose a text that makes use of source material that is relevant and credible and that is integrated in accordance with an appropriate style guide.”

<u>DIMENSIONS SCORED</u>	<u>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</u>
Makes use of sources	<i>The extent to which the student</i> supplied an outside source when needed
Relevancy of Sources	selected germane source material
Credibility of Sources	selected source material from authoritative sources—e.g., experts, reviewed by experts, etc.
Adherence to citation rules	followed rules for citing source material within the text and for creating a bibliography/works cited/reference list.

RESULTS

N=86

Calculating Total Scores

Each student text was scored by two people. The two scores were summed for a total score on each dimension and overall. When the two scorers disagreed by 2+ points, a third judge scored the text; outlier scores were discarded and three sequential scores were averaged and doubled for a total score.

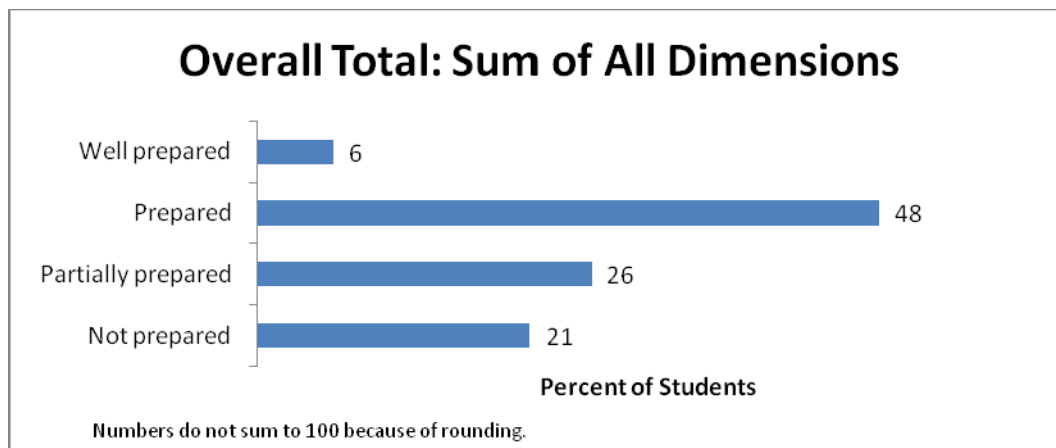
Score Correspondence to Categories

Highest possible total score on a single dimension = 8

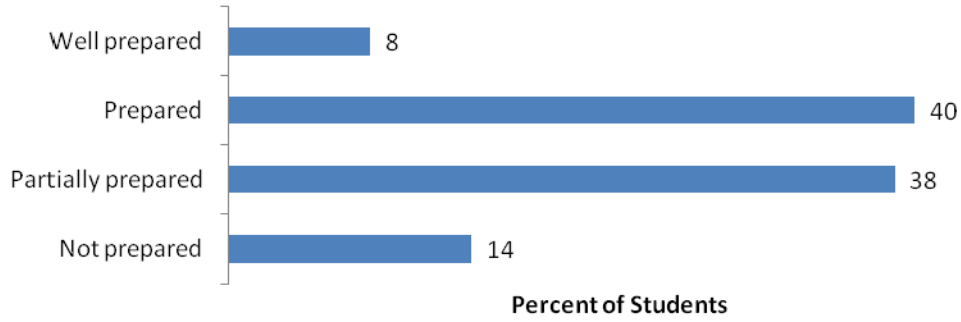
Highest possible total score on all dimensions = 32

Single dimension		All dimensions	
Total Score	Category	Total Score	Category
8	Well prepared	30-32	Well prepared
5-7	Prepared	19-29	Prepared
4	Partially prepared	15-18	Partially prepared
0-4	Not prepared	8-14	Not prepared

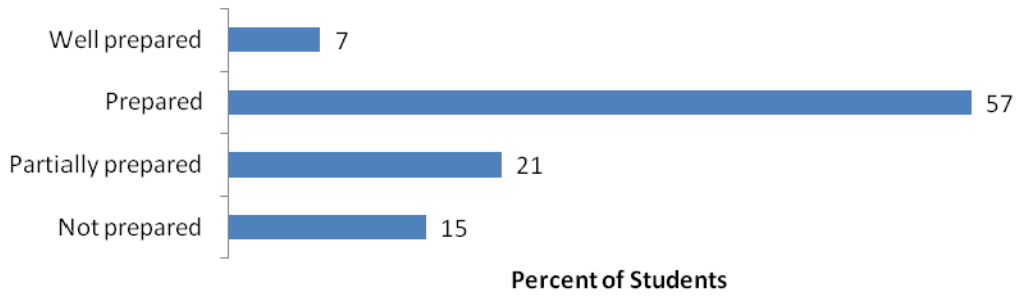
CHARTS



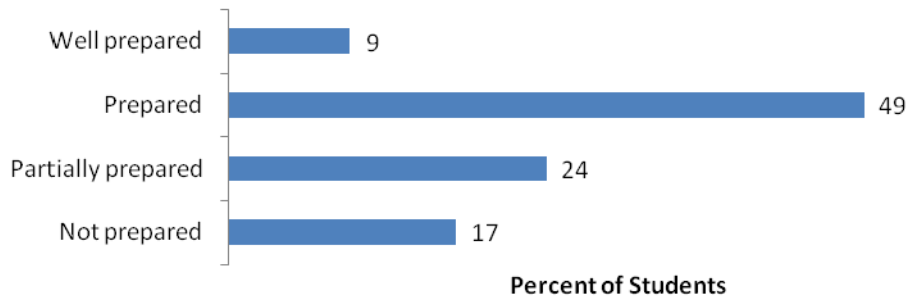
Makes Use of Sources



Relevancy of Sources



Credibility of Sources



Adherence to Citation Rules

