

AFE 083 Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) Assessment
Fall 2010 Report

Introduction

Academic Foundations English 083 (AFE 083) is a non-General Education course that focuses on writing, reading, and study skills. This course is designed to emphasize fluency, the writing process, sentence structure, editing and revision, paragraph and essay development, the comprehension and analysis of texts, and effective study habits and skills. The reading skills will be applied to selections of fiction and non-fiction including essays reflecting the various rhetorical modes. Study skills instruction includes emphasis on listening, note taking, following directions, understanding texts, goal setting, time management, and test taking. Special emphasis will be placed on helping students to overcome the anxieties of testing, reading, writing and studying. The following are the listed course goals for AFE 083:

Upon successful completion of the course students should be able to:

1. Write a five-paragraph essay.
2. Utilize proper research techniques necessary to write a fully-cited research paper using Modern Language Association (MLA) style format.

Purpose

This assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) conducted by Troy Hamilton seeks to assist the English instructors working for the Center for Academic Foundation to better understand exactly what topics/skills students are mastering. More than just engaging in information gathering, the desired intention of this study is to analyze and understand students' progress for the purpose of modifying and refining how they are being taught. The hope and expectation is that after the data is shared, each instructor will be encouraged to alter and/or modify their teaching approach to meet the needs of their individual students.

Methodology

The student learning outcomes (SLO) analysis implemented in Fall of 2010 for AFE 083 was used to assess course goal 1. Each of the 5 AFE 083 instructors that participated in this assessment analyzed students' essays to see, among other things, how well students were able to develop and sustain arguments throughout their essays.

- a. The sample population of students selected to participate in the assessment were twenty five, in total, from AFE 083 sections 001, 002, 003, DE1 and DE2. Instructors were asked to identify the first five students listed on their class roster to be part of the data collection. This approach helped prevent instructors from picking only their best students to be part of the assessment.
- b. The essays reviewed in the assessment were the two essays students submitted right before the midterm and final exams were administered.

c. The checklist rubric used for the essay assessment is given below.

Essex County College
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Survey
AFE 083/Fall 2010

English Assignment Survey

Assignment due Date _____ Section Number _____

Assignment Topic _____

For each of the following outcomes identified for inclusion in a paper assigned in AFE 083, please indicate their occurrence or lack of occurrence in your student's writing:

1. The essay includes an appropriate introductory paragraph.
 Yes Somewhat No
2. There is an appropriate topic sentence with the author's name and the title of the essay.
 Yes Somewhat No
3. A clear thesis statement was incorporated within the introductory paragraph.
 Yes Somewhat No
4. A relevant three-point sentence was established.
 Yes Somewhat No
5. Body paragraphs were well-structured.
 Yes Somewhat No
6. Body paragraphs were related to each other in a logical structure that supported the thesis.
 Yes Somewhat No
7. Proper in- text citation was utilized.
 Yes Somewhat No
8. The essay contained an appropriate concluding paragraph.
 Yes Somewhat No
9. The paper demonstrates an acceptable level of mechanics and language usage.
 Yes Somewhat No

The **Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs)** associated with course goal 1 are as follows:

- 1.1 *write an appropriate introductory paragraph;*
- 1.2 *compose an appropriate topic sentence;*
- 1.3 *construct a clear thesis statement;*
- 1.4 *establish a three-point sentence;*
- 1.5 *compose an appropriate topic sentence for each body paragraph;*
- 1.6 *utilize in-text citation;*
- 1.7 *write a concluding sentence for each body paragraph;*
- 1.8 *write an appropriate concluding paragraph; and*
- 1.9 *use correct grammar and syntax throughout the essay*

Student achievement of MPOs 1.1 through 1.3 provide evidence of how well students are able to develop an appropriate introductory paragraph, whereas achievement of MPOs 1.4 through 1.7 and 1.9 and MPO 1.8 were used to assess the body paragraphs and the conclusion paragraph respectively.

Assessment Results for Midterm Exam:

60% of the students were able to develop an appropriate introductory paragraph (i.e., achieved MPOs 1.1 – 1.3) before the **midterm exam** (both the mid-term and the final exams were designed by the Humanities Division). The first three questions on the checklist rubric were formulated to assess the introductory paragraph.

63% of the students were able to develop an appropriate body paragraph utilizing MLA in-text citation (i.e., achieved MPOs 1.4 – 1.7 and 1.9) before the **midterm exam**. Questions 4 through 7 and 9 on the checklist rubric were formulated to assess the body paragraphs.

61% of the students were able to develop an appropriate concluding paragraph before the **midterm exam**. Question 8 on the checklist rubric was designed to assess student ability to develop an appropriate concluding paragraph.

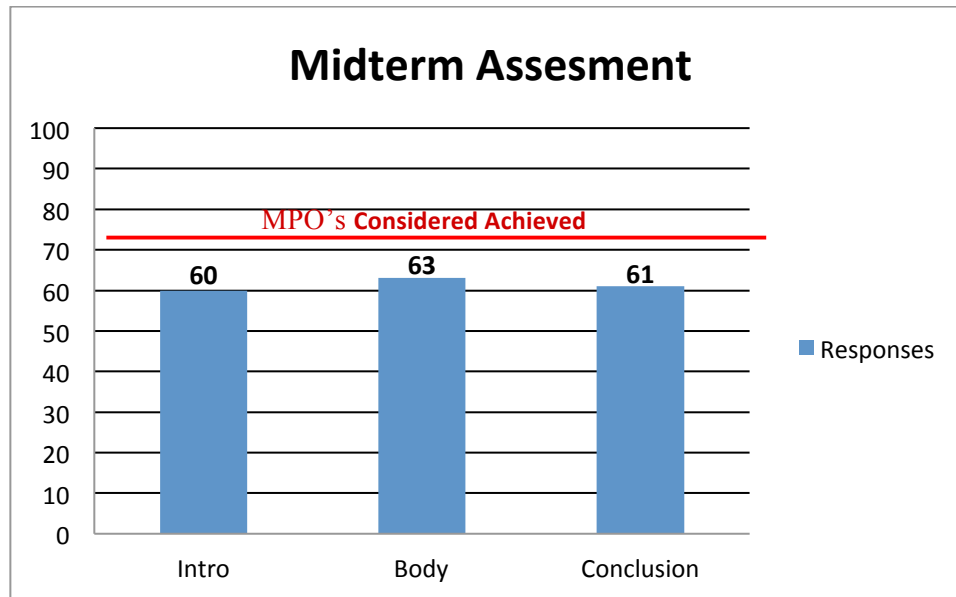


Diagram 1

These findings as displayed in diagram1, indicates that by the Fall 2010 midterm exam only 60% (introductory paragraph), 63% (body paragraphs), and 61% (concluding paragraph) of the sampled students attained the corresponding Measurable Performance Objectives (MPOs). For this study, if 70% of the students are able to accomplish a given objective, it is considered 'achieved.' In this particular study conducted prior to midterm, none of the MPOs were achieved. This implies that by the eighth week of the semester students were not performing/writing at the expected, desired level. It seems, based on anecdotal information gathered in discussions with students after the midterm assessment, that a number of factors contributed to their lack of achievement. Some of the factors reported by students were external, such as employment, financial difficulties, and child rearing. It is safe to conclude that these factors prohibited students from attending class regularly, which directly impacted their academic performance. In spite of this and based on the study findings, it is clear that AFE English instructors and Supplemental Instructors (SIs) need to come up with more effective pedagogical strategies in an effort to enhance their students performance preferably exceed 70% MPO achievability before the midterm exam.

Assessment Results for Final Exam:

By the Final Exam MPOs 1.1 thru 1.9 were achieved by the AFE students. However, this achievement might be accepted with hesitance the level of success was certainly by the narrowest of margin, especially when you factor in that AFE 083 is a developmental course.

71% of students were able to develop an appropriate introductory paragraph before the **final exam**, which is a small but considerable improvement from the midterm assessment (60%).

75% of students were able to develop an appropriate body paragraph utilizing MLA in-text citation before the **final exam**, which is a small but considerable improvement from the midterm assessment (63%).

71% of the students were able to develop an appropriate concluding paragraph before the **final exam** which is a small but considerable improvement from the midterm assessment (61%).

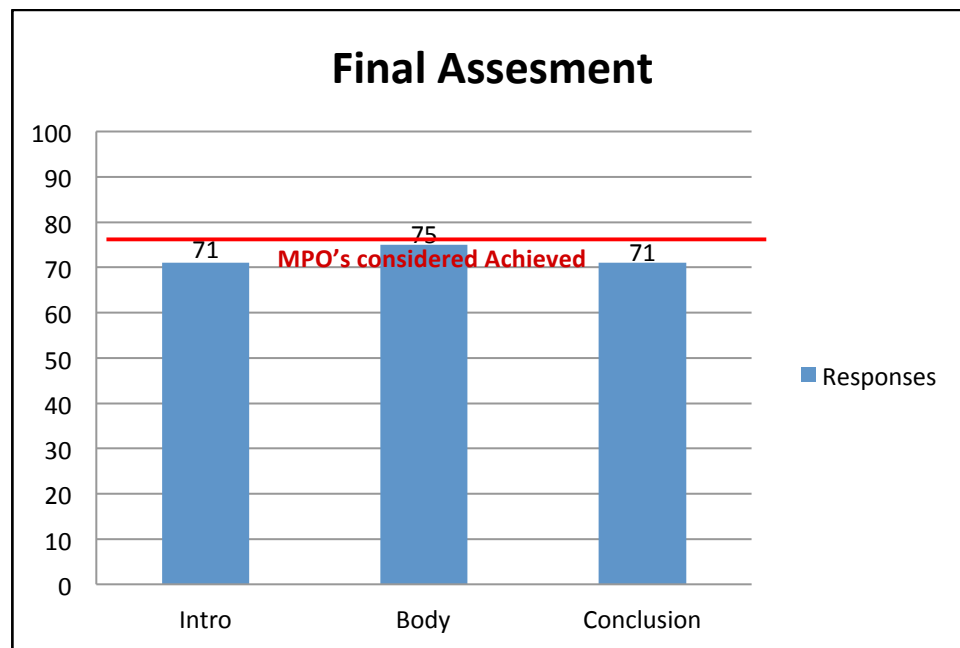


Diagram 2

Summary

As indicated in diagrams 1 and 2, which are based on the information gathered from the assessment, AFE 083 instructors in the CAF department need to spend more time developing their students' writing skills before the midterm exam if 70% or more of the students are to be able to achieve the course MPOs by the eighth week of the semester. This will definitely improve the writing skills of the students within CAF. When students can develop a good introductory paragraph, it is more likely that the overall structure—tone, diction and structural arguments—of the essay will be adequate as well. These are some of the strategies English instructors can implement in order to improve their student's success:

- spend more class time on the pre-writing process

- have student engaging in timed writing drills
- require that the supplemental instructor (SI) spend more time with struggling students
- offer more collaborative learning opportunities