**ENG 102 SLOAT SPRING 2011 REPORT**

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**Introduction**

A rubric was developed and used to measure student achievement of outcomes in ENG 102 during the Spring 2011 semester. This rubric directly assessed student performance in relation to course goal #4: Demonstrate effective composition skills through the writing of critical essays about literary elements. In our judgment, this course goal was so closely aligned with GEG #1 (Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing) that the same rubric could be used to assess student performance in response to the general education goal, at least in part.

Because ENG 102 was only included in the SLOAT assessment initiative beginning this Spring and because ENG 102 focuses upon a different course goal during its second half, the production of a multiple-source research paper, by the time the assessment plan and the rubric were developed, it was only feasible to ask instructors to use the rubric once.

Faculty support of this assessment effort was strong. Out of the thirty-nine sections of ENG 102 offered in the Spring, twenty-seven sections participated. The majority of ENG 102 sections were taught by instructors who understand that we must create a culture of assessment, and that we must assess our students' performance in order to improve learning outcomes.

**Methodology**

The rubric that was used consisted of nine items, each one directly responsive to the measurable performance objectives listed under course goal #4 on the departmental course outline. The outline had previously been approved both by the SLOAT chair and by the content experts within the Humanities Division who have been assigned to review all of our course outlines. When we communicated with ENG 102 instructors, we emphasized that the study was anonymous to ensure that the sample would be random and would not be weighted to ensure positive results. Instructors were asked to randomize the sample by using the rubric to assess the most recent essay written by each of the first five students listed alphabetically on their class rosters. Instructors rated the essays for each of the nine items on a three-point scale labeled "yes," "somewhat," or "no."

Instructions and rubrics was disseminated to instructors the sixth week of the semester, and instructors were asked to return the rubrics to us no later than the end of the ninth week. Once the completed rubrics were returned to us, a work study student in our Division tabulated the results by category since the rubrics were anonymous and raised no confidentiality issues. The results and the original rubrics upon which these results are based are currently stored in Professor Hayes's office.

**Results**

The results of our study were as follows:

1. The paper includes an introduction providing background necessary for understanding the argument to be made.

Yes 85 (63%) Somewhat 41 (30%) No 9 (7%)

1. The introduction includes a thesis relevant to the assignment and to the argument being made in the body of the essay.

Yes 78 (58%) Somewhat 46 (34%) No 11 (8%)

1. The body paragraphs are focused, unified, and relevant to the assignment and the essay’s thesis.

Yes 68 (51%) Somewhat 60 (45%) No 6 (4%)

1. The body paragraphs are organized in a logical progression so that each sentence leads into the next.

Yes 74 (55%) Somewhat 55 (41%) No 6 (4%)

1. The body paragraphs are presented in a structured and logical sequence.

Yes 76 (56%) Somewhat 55 (41%) No 4 (3%)

1. The body paragraphs provide and discuss appropriate textual evidence from the primary source to support the points made.

Yes 76 (56%) Somewhat 51 (38%) No 8 (6%)

1. The essay enters into a dialogue with the sources so that the student’s voice emerges and exercises control over the argument.

Yes 72 (53%) Somewhat 49 (36%) No 14(10%)

1. The paper documents all sources used in accordance with MLA format providing both in-text citations and a works cited page.

Yes 51 (38%) Somewhat 61 (45%) No 23 (17%)

1. The essay includes an appropriate conclusion that brings the argument to a logical and natural close.

Yes 82 (61%) Somewhat 44 (32%) No 9 (7%)

**Analysis of Results and Future Plans for Student Assessment**

The results demonstrate that by the middle of the semester, the majority of students included in the sample have achieved at least partial mastery of each of the measurable performance objectives we intend to teach them and expect them to learn. In seven of the nine categories, the percentage of students who possess at least partial mastery of the required skill is more than 90%, and in the other two (items 7 and 8) the percentage of students who possess at least partial mastery of the required skill exceeds 80%.

While we find these results to be encouraging and an indication that ENG 102 in on the right track in meeting its objectives, we also recognize the need for further research and for refinement in the delivery of curriculum to improve the rates of student success.

As the logical next step, now that we have developed this rubric, during the Fall semester, it is our intent to provide adjuncts with rubrics at the beginning of the course and to ask instructors to evaluate a random sample of students on both their first critical essay about literary elements and their last. Because ENG 102 was included in the SLOAT initiative for the first time this past Spring, we do not know how much students may have improved in their mastery of the necessary skills over the course of the first half of the semester, and that is something we need to find out.

In addition, Professor Bartinique is developing a rubric to assess student research papers, a rubric that is responsive to ENG 102's first course goal. There are enough commonalities between the measurable performance objectives listed under Course Goal #4 and Course Goal #1 so that we should be able to use the results derived from using that rubric on research papers that have already been gathered so that we can reach some conclusions about progress made by students in gaining certain necessary skills before the course has ended. This rubric will be used by the Humanities Division's Testing Committee to assess student research papers once it has been completed.

Finally, we are looking carefully at these results and considering several different options for addressing them. In terms of demonstrating relatively complete mastery, students were weakest in providing MLA documentation. There is a possibility that this weakness is rooted in the fact that MLA rules are relatively lenient when the only source that is being used in an essay is the textbook for the course. Indeed, there has some debate within the English Department with regard to the inclusion of this MPO under course goal #4. Some of us favor the elimination of this objective while others argue that students need the practice in preparation for the research paper. In order to decide the issue one way or the other, we need to assess the research papers to see how well students do with the documentation of sources when MLA rules are more absolute.

In addition, we are concerned about the percentage of students who fall into the category of having somewhat mastered the necessary skill. We have selected two categories for improvement in the fall: MPO #3 (The body paragraphs are focused, unified, and relevant to the assignment and the essay's thesis.) and MPO #7 (The essay enters into a dialogue with the sources so that the student's voice emerges and exercises control over the argument.). MPO #3 was selected because a high number of students demonstrated only partial mastery of the skill, and MPO #7 was selected because it was the only category other than the documentation of sources category in which 10% or more of the students did not demonstrate at least partial mastery. Besides, we believe that these MPOs are interdependent and improving one will most likely improve the other as well. Professor Hayes, the ENG 102 coordinator, will be writing a memo to ENG 102 instructors asking them to devote a bit more emphasis to the development of these skills and suggesting strategies that can be used as they make this effort. Professor Hayes's memo may also ask instructors to emphasize the documentation of sources more, depending upon what we find out once the ENG 102 research papers have been evaluated.