

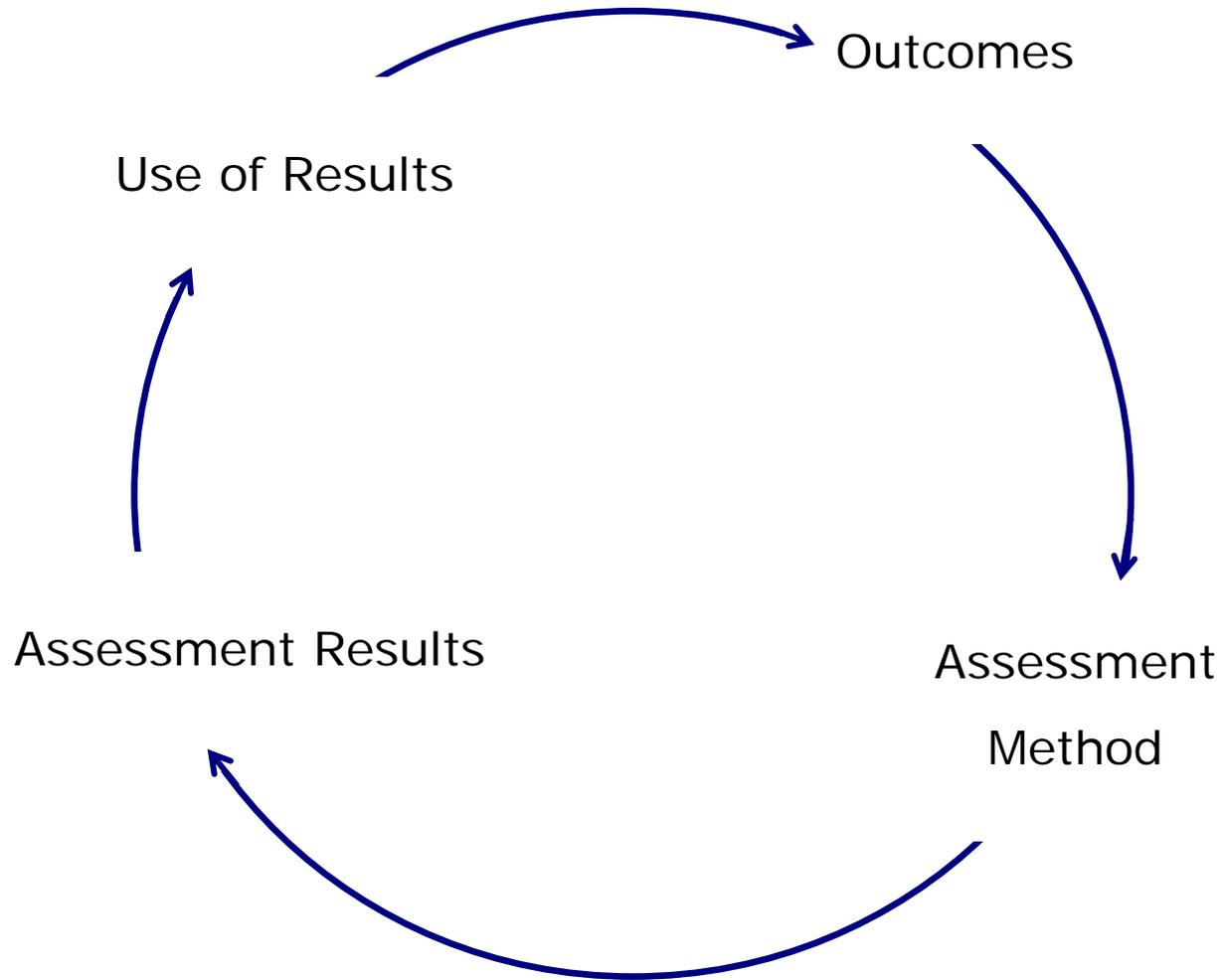
Assessment Of Basic Writing Skills To Increase Curricular Consistency And Improve Student Learning



Prepared by:
Terra Schehr

Director of Institutional Research
Loyola College in Maryland
Baltimore, Maryland

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Context

- ❑ Small liberal arts women's college
- ❑ Campus with modest and developing assessment program
- ❑ Faculty are interested in how assessment will improve the classroom experience and student learning

Structure of English 001

- Basic composition course

- Taught almost exclusively by visiting and adjunct faculty
 - Overseen by a Director of Composition
 - Kirsten Saxton, Associate Professor of English;
Mills College in Oakland, California
ksaxton@mills.edu

- Cornerstone of General Education

General Education Requirement

Written Communication (2 credits)

Graduates of a liberal arts institution should be able to write papers in a variety of contexts, using generally accepted grammar and forms to convey ideas, research findings, and arguments.

ENG 001 (or equivalent) and a second writing-intensive course.

- Mills College Undergraduate Catalog

GE - Written Communication SLOs

- ❑ A. Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of rhetorical forms and how these forms are used in specific academic disciplines, cultural contexts, and institutions outside the academy;
- ❑ B. Write clearly organized essays with the following characteristics: effective paragraphing, thesis development, transitions, use and interpretation of evidence, evidence of larger structure and organization;
- ❑ C. Write essays that incorporate examples from other writers, demonstrate critical thinking and interpretation about the ideas of other writers, and use correct documentation for these examples;
- ❑ D. Use draft and revision processes, demonstrate understanding of different stages of the writing process, and engage in editing and revision of peer essays;
- ❑ E. Write in a style that is both personally expressive and compatible with the specific discipline or context of the project;
- ❑ F. Produce essays and other forms of writing free from sentence level error and identify where to get further information about such errors (e.g., how to use a handbook);
- ❑ G. Be familiar with and able to use the tools and resources of an academic library in addition to Internet resources;
- ❑ H. Be competent in the use of the citation style appropriate to a discipline.

Assessment Method

- Student papers assessed by a group of T/TT English faculty who had previously been involved in the teaching of Eng 001
- Papers assessed using a scoring guide

Development of Scoring Guide

- Work with Director of Composition
- Identify outcomes addressed at the Eng 001 level and that could be assessed using student artifacts
- Define various levels of competence for each outcome

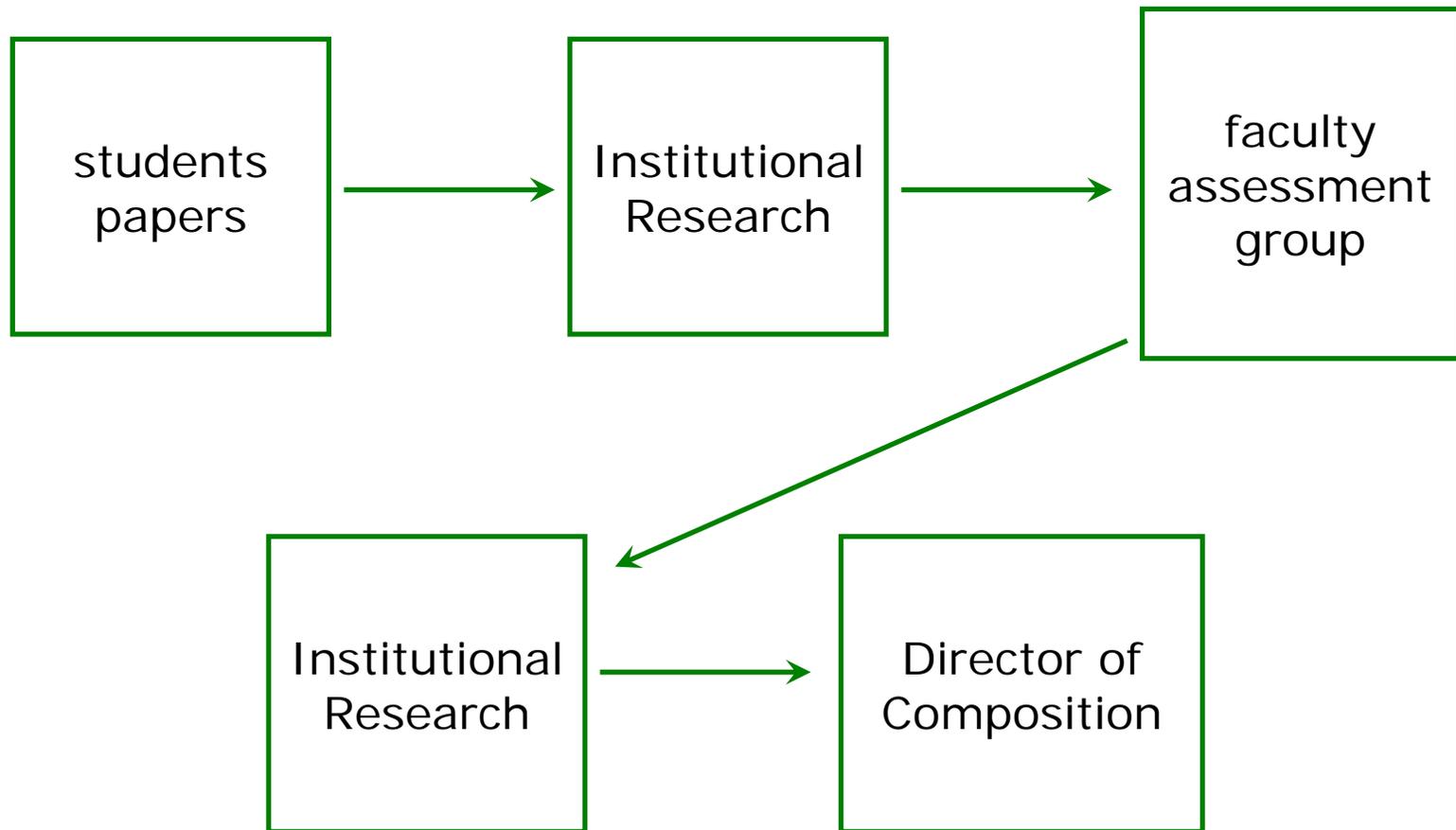
Outcomes Addressed in this Assessment

- ❑ B. Write clearly organized essays with the following characteristics: effective paragraphing, thesis development, transitions, use and interpretation of evidence, evidence of larger structure and organization;
- ❑ C. Write essays that incorporate examples from other writers, demonstrate critical thinking and interpretation about the ideas of other writers, and use correct documentation for these examples;
- ❑ E. Write in a style that is both personally expressive and compatible with the specific discipline or context of the project;
- ❑ F. Produce essays and other forms of writing free from sentence level error and identify where to get further information about such errors (e.g., how to use a handbook);

Scoring Guide

Overall Score _____	4. Accomplished (Shows skill; many strengths present)	3. Competent (On balance the strengths outweigh the weaknesses)	2. Developing (Strengths and need for revision are about equal)	1. Beginning (Need for revision outweighs strengths)
Thesis (B)	Clear and original thesis of appropriate scope.	Clear but less original or refined thesis.	Thesis is present but needs work in clarity, originality, or scope.	Thesis is weak or inadequate: absent, unclear, or inappropriate in scope.
Organization (B)	Clear logical progression of ideas and clear logical transitions.	Generally logical progression of ideas and generally good transitions but needs to be honed.	Confusing progression as a whole and or within paragraphs.	Lack of logical progression of ideas and lack of transitions impede understanding.
Support (C)	Argument is well developed; paper provides appropriate, carefully analyzed supporting evidence.	Argument is reasonably well developed and supported.	Evidence and/or analysis is weak.	Almost no appropriate evidence and/or analysis.
Style (E)	Successful tone, varied sentence structures, clear and confident prose.	Reasonably successful tone, varied sentence structures, clear prose.	Less successful tone, less varied sentence structures, less clear prose.	Tone, sentence structure, and prose style impede paper.
Mechanics (F)	Essay demonstrates mastery of standard conventions of spelling, grammar, syntax, and punctuation.	While there may be minor errors, the paper follows standard conventions of spelling, grammar, syntax, and punctuation.	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, syntax, and punctuation are distracting.	Writing contains numerous errors and spelling, grammar, syntax, or punctuation, that interfere with comprehension.

Process of Assessment



Outcomes – Written Communication

N=46	4. Accomplished (Shows skill; many strengths present)	3. Competent (On balance the strengths outweigh the weaknesses)	2. Developing (Strengths and need for revision are about equal)	1. Beginning (Need for revision outweighs strengths)
Overall	24%	24%	52%	0%
Thesis (B)	22%	37%	37%	4%
Organization (B)	18%	39%	43%	0%
Support (C)	22%	37%	41%	0%
Style (E)	26%	52%	22%	0%
Mechanics (F)	28%	57%	15%	0%

Outcomes – Written Communication

Organization → Overall ↓	4. Accomplished	3. Competent	2. Developing	1. Beginning
4. Accomplished	8	3		
3. Competent		9	2	
2. Developing		6	18	
1. Beginning				

Outcomes – Written Communication

Mechanics → Overall ↓	4. Accomplished	3. Competent	2. Developing	1. Beginning
4. Accomplished	6	5		
3. Competent	5	4	2	
2. Developing	2	17	5	
1. Beginning				

Outcomes – Curricular & Faculty Development

- ❑ “Significant” revision the Eng 001 curriculum
- ❑ Revision of Eng 001 guidelines for faculty
- ❑ Creation of a comprehensive handbook for faculty teaching Eng 001
- ❑ Assessment formalized

Curricular and
Faculty development

Use of Results

Outcomes

Assessment Results

Assessment

Method

Many students still
"developing" as
writers after Eng 001

Assessment project that
resulted in the improvement
of student learning

Outcomes

Use of Results

Assessment Results

Assessment

Method

Most students
"competent" or
"accomplished"
writers after Eng 001

Prepared by:
Terra Schehr
Director of Institutional Research
Loyola College in Maryland

(Presentation based on work that took place at Mills College)

tschehr@loyola.edu