

Department of English Assessment Session II
English 30: Basic Reading Skills, Reading 56: College Reading, and English 102: Critical
Thinking Through Literature
(1/14/11)

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Methodology

We held our second Student Learning Outcome Assessment Session on the Flex Day prior to the spring semester. We gathered statistics of student success in three courses taught by full-time faculty—English 30, READ 56, and English 102—with the continued goal of assessing all courses taught in the department.

The data sample was a random selection of final papers from all of the sections taught by full-time faculty. The papers were shuffled, evenly distributed among the readers, and graded by a rubric, with all faculty members making reference to pre-established departmental guidelines and using anonymous tally sheets for assessment of student success in achieving the student-learning outcomes.

A significant change from the last session was the decision to narrow the range of assessment to “adequate” or “unsatisfactory,” the faculty members deciding that the distinction between “proficient” and “adequate” is superfluous to the evaluation of whether the students have succeeded in achieving the student-learning outcomes.

The session took approximately two and 1/2 hours.

Student Learning Outcomes

ENGL C030: Basic Writing Skills

- A. Write developed, coherent, unified paragraphs in a variety of modes, such as exemplification, compare/contrast, cause and effect, etc., with clear topic sentences, subtopic sentences, paragraph unity, coherence, and development.
Construct five-paragraph essays with beginner level skill including statement of thesis.
- B. Identify and correct errors in parts of speech, run-ons, and fragments and employ varying sentence structures.
- C. Read actively, distinguishing among topics/main ideas, determining claim and support, and identifying transition words.

READ C056: College Reading

- A. Analyze the conceptual framework of college-level reading materials, such as patterns of organization, stated and implied main ideas, major and minor supporting ideas, and transitions.
- B. Assess the viability of explanations and arguments by identifying author's purpose and tone, distinguishing facts from opinions, and drawing sound inferences through logic and one's own experience
- C. Synthesize multiple sources by determining relation among texts on a single topic and finding common ideas
- D. Demonstrate increased college-level vocabulary.

ENGL 102: Critical Thinking Through Literature

- A. Distinguish among facts, inferences, judgments, and implications.
- B. Analyze and create written arguments, using sound reasoning and relevant supporting details.
- C. Identify premises, both stated and unstated.
- D. Recognize fallacious reasoning.

Data

ENGL 30

SLO	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	% of Success
A	10	0	100
B	10	0	100
C	9	1	90
D	9	1	90

READ 56

SLO	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	% of Success
A	11	5	68.75
B	12	6	66.66
C	18	0	100
D	15	2	88.23

Conclusions

ENGL 30: These statistics are uniform and indicate that in these composition courses the students are achieving all of the student-learning outcomes at a rate of higher than 90%, which we determined to be an excellent performance overall.

READ 56: The data indicate a significant disparity between student success in achieving outcomes A and B, and C and D, the first two at a less than 70% success rate and the second two at nearly 90% and higher. After discussing the discrepancy, faculty concluded that the reason for the lower success rate in outcomes A and B is the unsuitability of a paper artifact to determine whether students can analyze the conceptual framework of college-level reading materials or assess the viability of explanations and arguments by identifying an author's purpose and tone. In other words, the low success rates with A and B have little to do with pedagogy or instruction in READ 56 but rather with the means by which student success is assessed. The solution to this problem, it was quickly recognized, is to use two artifacts rather than one: a paper for outcomes C and D and a quiz or exam on reading comprehension for outcomes A and B. This modification will be incorporated in future assessment of READ 56.

ENGL 102: A similar but far more widespread problem appeared in our attempt to assess student success in achieving the student-learning outcomes of English 102. It quickly became apparent that a paper artifact was appropriate for assessing *only one* of the four outcomes of the class: B. to analyze and create written arguments, using sound reasoning and relevant supporting details. Because of this difficulty, the faculty members repeatedly stopped to ask questions about how, by means of the papers they were evaluating, they could assess the students' ability to distinguish between facts and inferences, identify premises, and recognize fallacious reasoning. After a lengthy discussion, the department decided that the assessment of English 102 would have to be deferred until a more suitable artifact, a quiz or exam that tests the students' abilities to perform critical thinking exercises, was identified and included with the paper artifact for student-learning outcome B. Fortunately, we have already written an exam on logical fallacies to which we could include material designed to assess student-learning outcomes A and C. The addition of this exam data will be incorporated in future assessment of English 102.

Future Assessment

The next assessment session, to be held on the Flex Day prior to Fall Semester 2011, will evaluate student success in the following courses: **ENGL 20, 151, and READ 36 and 46.**