

2007-08 General Education Assessment Results

General Education Goal Assessed

Communication - Employ written and oral communication skills in order to convey clear and organized information to target audiences for specific purposes.

1. Generate communication that addresses audience and purpose.
2. Employ syntax, usage, style and tone appropriate to academic disciplines and professional environments.
3. Present ideas in an organized framework.
4. Develop ideas using concrete reasoning and clear explanation.

Measures

Direct Measure: An internally designed rubric was used to assess student proficiency in written communication. The rubric measures three attributes: organization, development of ideas, and mechanics.

Indirect Measure: An analysis of results for courses with English pre-requisites (including those requiring ENG-101 eligibility) and those without pre-requisites.

Statement About Method:

Artifacts for this exercise were provided by faculty members. Any instructor with a writing assignment was invited to participate, regardless of discipline. The only requirement for submitting student papers was a work cited/bibliography page containing a minimum of three outside sources.

A team of faculty members worked in pairs applying the rubric to student artifacts. The event began with a calibration exercise to ensure consistency among evaluators. (See “Training Process for Evaluating Student Artifacts” for more information.) In the event of a disagreement among the two readers, a third reader applied the rubric to make the final pass/fail decision.

Explain Standards Used for Achievement of Objective:

Student work was evaluated on a three-point scale: exceeds expectations (3), meets expectations (2), and does not meet expectations (1) for each of the three attributes. A minimum score of 6 must be obtained in order to achieve an acceptable level of proficiency.

Results

Number of Artifacts Assessed: 318

Number of Artifacts that Meet or Exceed Expectations: 190 (60%)

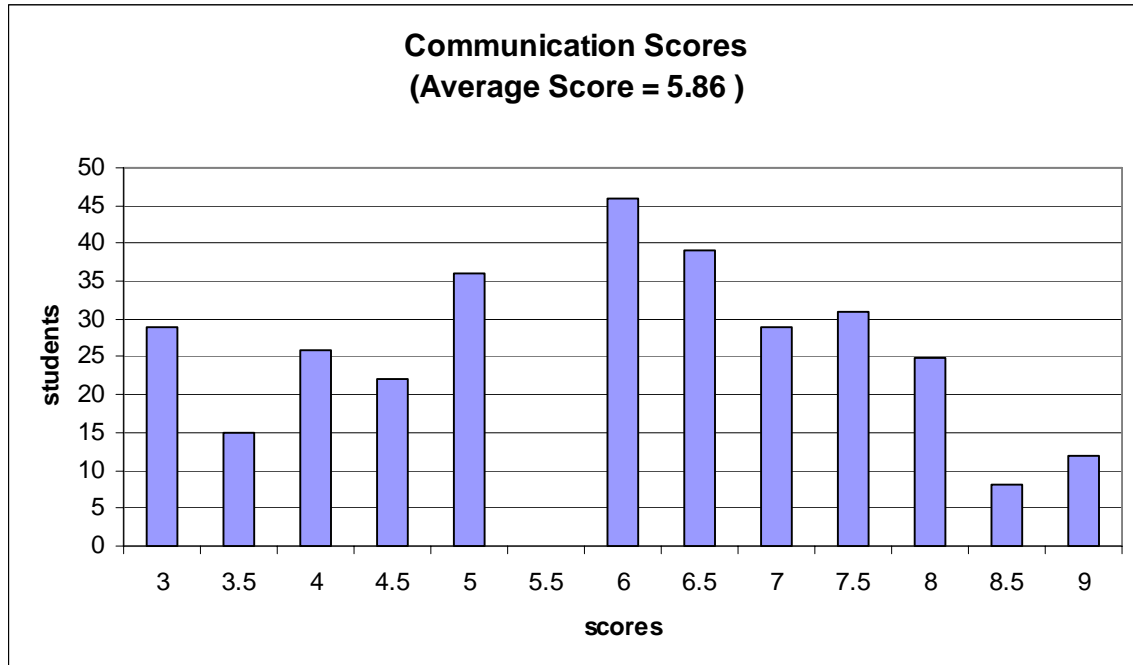
Number of Artifacts that Do Not Meet Expectations: 128 (40%)

Number of Artifacts Requiring a Third Reader: 80 (25%)

Direct Measure

Overall Scores

The average score for the Communication assessment was **5.86**. More than half the artifacts had a score of 6 or lower. In other words, 55% of the artifacts were at or below the minimal proficiency for written communication. Graph 1 depicts the frequency distribution of scores.



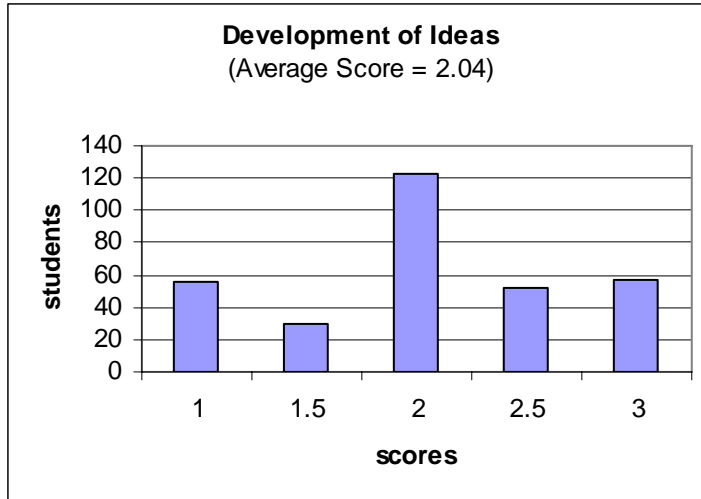
Graph 1

Scores for Attributes

The three attributes are listed from highest average score to lowest.

Development of Ideas - The length of the written work provides in-depth coverage of the topic and assertions are clearly supported by evidence.

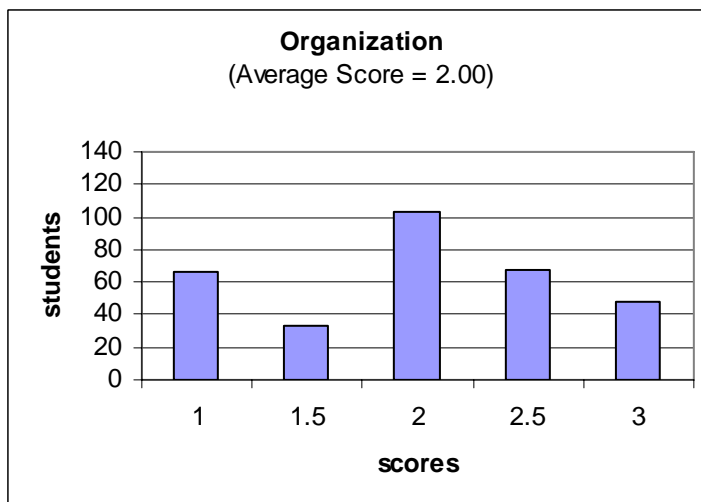
The development of ideas attribute had the highest average score of **2.04**. Based on the distribution of scores in Graph 2, the length of the written work was sufficient to cover the topic and assertions were supported by evidence more often than not. Twenty-seven percent of the artifacts were found to be deficient for this attribute. Evaluators commented that they “rewarded any discernable development.” Some papers compared and contrasted ideas without coming to a conclusion.



Graph 2

Organization – Written work has clear and appropriate beginning, development and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions are also clear and appropriate.

The average score for organization was **2.00**. On average, the written work had an adequate beginning, development and conclusion. Paragraphing and transitions were also adequate. Thirty-one percent of the artifacts were deemed deficient for organization. Evaluators commented on the wide range of writing assignments submitted for this assessment and that diaries were the hardest to evaluate because the assigned organizational structure would be chronological by date. However, within each entry there could be a lack of paragraphing and transition. They also noted that it was obvious that some assignments had specific instructions about how to structure the paper.

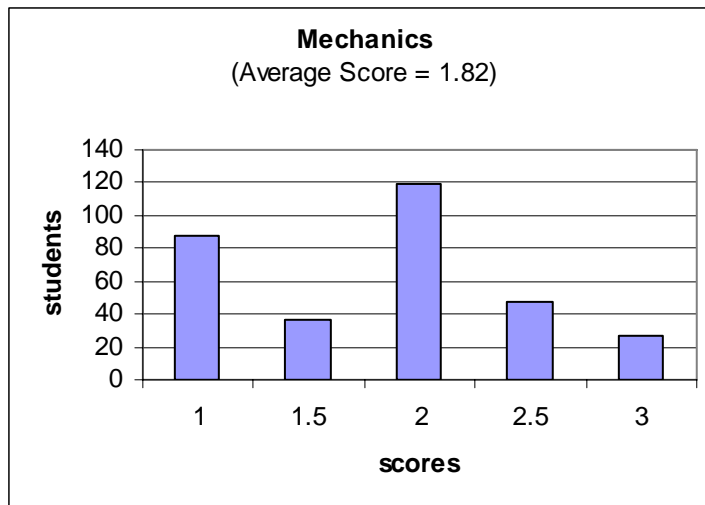


Graph 3

Mechanics - Written work has no more than one major error and few minor errors in word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Mechanics had the lowest average score (**1.82**) of the three attributes. It is the only attribute with an average score below 2.00. The evaluators commented that mechanics was the easiest to evaluate since the number of errors could be quantified. Thirty-nine percent of the artifacts were found to be deficient for this attribute. Graph 4 depicts the frequency of scores. All evaluators agreed that mechanics was the worst category and expressed an interest in expanding this part of the rubric by incorporating more attributes and an additional (fourth) level of performance for future assessments. They felt there was an obvious lack of edit sessions prior to paper submissions.

It is important to note that the description for the highest level of performance in mechanics was modified after the calibration exercise. Faculty decided to change the wording from “written work has no errors” to “written work has no more than one major error and few minor errors.”

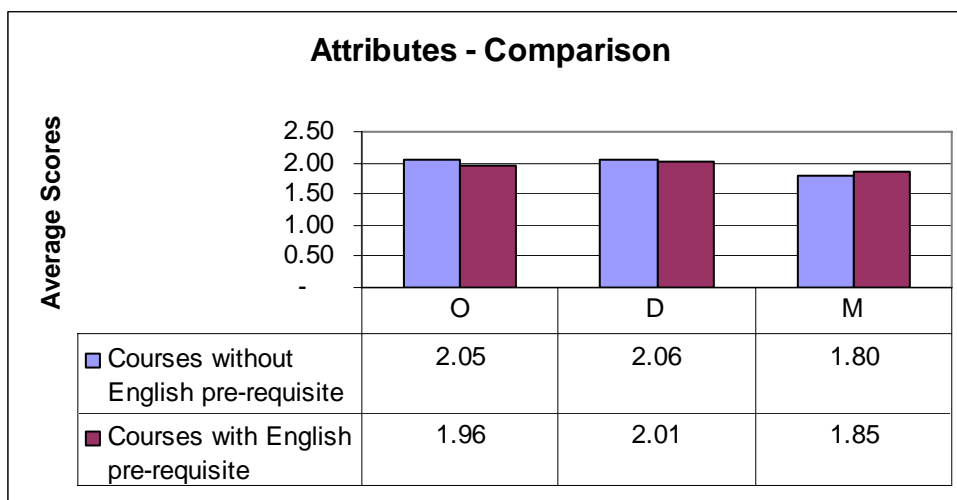


Graph 4

Indirect Measure

The average score for artifacts from courses without English pre-requisites was slightly higher than the average score for artifacts from courses with pre-requisites (5.91 vs. 5.82). Neither score is above the established performance standard. Graph 5 depicts the average scores by attributes. Artifacts from courses without pre-requisites scored higher in organization and development of ideas. The artifacts from courses with pre-reqs scored higher in mechanics.

It is important to note that this measure is not an accurate reflection of our students’ current level of English proficiency. The fact that English is not a pre-requisite for a course does not guarantee that students have not completed English prior to taking the course. The next assessment should include an analysis of English course success which requires the collection of student IDs. This information was difficult to collect during the Information Literacy pilot project and is believed to have contributed to the low participation rates among faculty.



Graph 5

Conclusions Regarding the Overall Assessment:

In general, students are not meeting expectations for Communication. The average overall score was below the minimally acceptable score of 6. Only 60% of the artifacts met or exceeded expectations.

Strengths/Weaknesses -

Strengths – Faculty participation. Thirty-six instructors submitted artifacts for this assessment. (By campus: Allegheny (6), Boyce (5), North (8), and South (17).) Nine instructors participated in the evaluation.

Weaknesses – More than half the artifacts were at or below proficiency for written communication. Forty percent did not meet expectations. Thirty-nine percent of the artifacts were found to be deficient in mechanics.

Actions to Be Taken to Improve Student Learning:

- Recommend offering professional development workshop on designing good writing assignments (including clear notification to students on expectations) and creating scoring rubrics for writing assignments that consider the student behaviors defined for the general education goal for Communication.
- Share the results with faculty at the fall 2008 Faculty Professional Development Program highlighting the expectations for student learning in mechanics, organization, and development of ideas.
- Conduct a survey to gather information about the types of writing instruction provided by faculty at CCAC. This information could be used to develop the professional development workshops.

Actions to Be Taken to Improve Assessment Process:

- Continue the calibration exercise and modify the rubric:
 - expand mechanics section of rubric to evaluate each item separately (word selection and use, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization)
 - modify the rubric to include a fourth level of performance: excellent (4), good (3), adequate (2), and poor (1)
- Consider changing the process for collecting artifacts to include student IDs for the purpose of comparing Communication scores of students that successfully completed ENG-101/ENG-102 and those that did not.

Acknowledgements:

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