

English Program Assessment Report 2014-2015

Report Summary

This report is comprised using the following the Assessment Report format: (1) A list of program learning outcomes assessed for the current school year; (2) a description of the methods of program assessment used this year; (3) the results of this year's assessment; (4) analysis of the assessment results; (5) planned program changes based on assessment results; (6) program goals/needs; and (7) possible changes (additions/modifications) in assessment methods for the future.

Quincy University Mission Statement

Quincy University stands as a Catholic, independent, liberal arts institution of higher learning in the Franciscan tradition. Inspired by the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi, we respect each person as a sister or brother with dignity, value, and worth. We work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We prepare men and women for leadership and for the transformation of the world by educating them to seek knowledge that leads to wisdom. We welcome and invite all to share our spirit and life.

English Program Mission Statement

The Department of English at Quincy University, in the spirit of the institution's Franciscan mission, respects all its students as individuals. The Department supports student writing throughout the university, provides general education courses in the spirit of a liberal arts education, and imparts to all its students an understanding of world literary traditions and cultural histories. The study of various texts is meant to aid students in developing and honing habits of inquiry, critical thinking, research, written and oral fluency, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Through the reading of literary texts in English and in translation, thorough analysis and discussion of those texts, and analytical and creative writing, students become sophisticated readers and accomplished writers who are able to appropriately and effectively address diverse audiences. All courses strive to impart to students knowledge of and respect for the power and potential of language. While a mastery of written and oral language and critical analysis and research is applicable to a variety of engagements with the world, our degree in particular prepares students for work in education, public relations, advertising, writing, editing, publishing, and business. It is also excellent preparation for advanced study in business, education, law, medicine, theology, and librarianship.

Composition Program Mission Statement

In the spirit of the institution's Franciscan mission, the philosophy of the Quincy University Writing Program is founded upon a multiliteracies pedagogy and process-based approach that fosters critical thinking and re-writing by making the different stages of student writing the center of instruction. Our program produces skilled and responsible twenty-first century writers

who are able to adapt to a variety of rhetorical and professional situations. Our collaborative approach encourages students to see their writing as a means of understanding, rather than as evidence of it. In our culturally and technologically diverse world, the QU writing program encourages invention, arrangement, and style to enable students to not only learn new information, but also to cultivate the best writing practices for success in other disciplines.

English Program Objectives

The objectives of English courses include increased development of close and critical readings of literary texts, increased facility in using textual evidence to support an argument or interpretation, appropriate incorporation of primary and/or secondary sources, and increased sophistication and complexity at all levels of discourse. Students perform textual analysis by working directly with literary and other texts, which may include works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, literary criticism, and primary historical documents. Students identify and make use of scholarly research sources in reading and writing, and students document sources correctly in MLA style.

Composition Program Objectives

The objectives of the composition program include increased student facility in analyzing and applying characteristics of audience, purpose, and task to determine appropriate rhetorical structure. Students summarize, paraphrase, and evaluate complex arguments, claims, and evidence to identify appropriate and relevant information related to the writing task. They take positions on issues to explore, complicate, support, or refute arguments. Students construct cohesive, well-developed, focused original arguments using purposeful language, syntax, and tone. They improve their writing through feedback (peers, instructor, Student Success Center tutors) and by employing a variety of editing strategies. They apply correct conventions for incorporating and documenting sources in writing (MLA and APA).

English Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students read and discuss various genres written by various authors from various historical periods and cultures.
2. Students formulate close readings by identifying key elements and various levels of meaning in a particular text.
3. Students employ major literary concepts, strategies for approaching diverse literary texts, and recognize generic differences among texts.
4. Students discuss a variety of literary styles.
5. Students recognize the historical, social, and political influences found in literature.
6. Students represent an author's work accurately and thoroughly in writing.

7. Students trace and discuss the significant growth and development that have taken place within a literary period, a national literature, the work of a major author, or a major genre.
8. Students acquire oral communication skills through the delivery of presentation(s) which state a thesis and support the thesis with literary texts as well as other resources (criticism, history, film, etc.).
9. Students reconsider their own point of view and others' as inspired by the readings and discussion.
10. Students demonstrate methods of intellectual inquiry by conducting research designed to evaluate and analyze the texts of the course and by discussing that research with the class.
11. Students develop critical thinking skills in relation to literature and the world.
12. Students transition into more complex forms of oral and written discourse.
13. Students incorporate a variety of support into discussions and essays.
14. Students demonstrate intelligent, analytical and critical thinking by formulating and defending original arguments supported with evidence from the texts.
15. Students consider alternative viewpoints and perspectives.
16. Students develop complex thesis statements and acquire a perceptively clear consideration of audience and purpose.
17. Students employ writing as a process from pre-writing to drafting to completing an assignment.
18. Students demonstrate a productive use of comments and feedback from teacher and peers to develop self-awareness as a reader and writer.

Composition Program Learning Outcomes

In keeping with the communication demands of the twenty-first century, the composition program at Quincy University has based its outcomes for its first-year composition students upon the “WPA Outcomes Statement for first-Year Composition” (<http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>), which was adopted in July 2014, along with the “Eight Habits of Mind” (curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition) developed from the collaborations of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project in 2011 (“Framework for success in Postsecondary Writing”).

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing

1. Students will use reading and composing for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts.

2. Students will read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations.
3. Students will locate primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books scholarly databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources.
4. Students will integrate their own ideas with those from appropriate sources, using strategies such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign to compose texts.
5. Students will work in an adaptable physical environment, where multiple literacy activities occur, promoting ongoing and productive processes.

Rhetorical Knowledge

1. Students will use key rhetorical concepts by analyzing and composing a variety of texts.
2. Students will gain experience reading and composing in several genres in order to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.
3. Students will respond to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure.
4. Students will use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences.
5. Students will match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations.

Processes

1. Students will use recursive stages of the writing process as they create increasingly complex texts. Students will use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas as they develop a writing project through multiple drafts.
2. Students will develop flexible strategies of writing, participating in collaborative idea generation, workshops, reviews, and conferences to develop and improve texts.
3. Students will learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress.
4. Students will adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities.
5. Students will reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work.

Knowledge of Conventions

1. Students will develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising.
2. Students will understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary.
3. Students will gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions.
4. Students will learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts.
5. Students will explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions.

6. Students will practice applying citations conventions systematically in their own work.

I. The Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes

In the English Program, we used the following assessment methods: midterm exams, final exams, quizzes, presentations, close reading essays and researched essays of varying length, equaling 20 pages total to meet the standards for a writing enriched course. For our senior English majors, we require the student to write a 20-25 page senior seminar paper that the student then presents to the other majors and members of the English faculty. The senior seminar is based on a lengthy and in-depth study of one author.

In the composition program, we used the following methods: multiple essay drafts, peer review, quizzes, in-class writing assignments, and/or journals. At the end of each semester of composition, we also require the students to turn in a portfolio in which they revise at least one of their previous essays and write a reflection essay discussing their growth throughout the semester.

II. Description of Assessment Methods

Since the program was in a period of transition, including the overturning of faculty, the exams, quizzes, presentations, and essays were adequate to assess students in 200 and 300 level English courses.

We had one senior student who completed a senior seminar course and paper in the Spring of 2015. In an independent study, this student was guided through each stage of her reading, research, and writing process in order to produce a paper that was an original analysis of the author, self-directed, and of graduate student quality, in order that it be used in her applications for graduate school.

The composition program went through a major overhaul during this academic year, coordinated by two faculty members. The entire composition faculty met monthly to discuss and compose the new curriculum.

We continued to use the portfolio method of assessment in which the portfolio was worth 30% or more of the student's final grade.

III. Results of this year's assessment

The senior seminar paper was a success. The student composed a strong, analytical paper that was well written. It was also well received by her peer English majors, who gave her effective feedback. There was no other English faculty member present at the presentation, since we did not have another full time faculty member at that time (end of Spring 2015 semester).

In composition, we will alter the portfolio percentage to be worth 10% of the student's grade rather than 30% or more. This change puts a heavier weight on the work the students perform during the semester. We also chose new textbooks as part of the new curriculum for the 2015-2016 academic year.

IV. Analysis of assessment results

With the hire of another faculty member, the English Department will be working throughout the next academic year to solidify the assessment of students in the 200 and 300 level courses, as well as working to redesign and update the senior seminar to give the students more choice in their author study. The author is usually the one from the senior seminar course, chosen by the professor. Giving students more choice in their topic would give them more ownership of their work, as well as be geared towards their future studies.

We will also be continuing our work with the redesign of the composition program and curriculum, since this will be the first year piloting the new program and new textbooks. Our long-term goal is to design our own composition program textbook, specific to Quincy University, through Fountainhead Publishing Company, the company that publishes the books we are using in the next academic year.

V. Planned program changes based on assessment results

We will be looking through the catalogue to update our course offerings and descriptions, as we also assess the senior seminar topic and requirements.

We have been and will continue to work with the VPAA office as we move forward with the changes to the composition program.

VI. Program Aspirations

As mentioned above, we do have aspirations to design our own composition program textbook, in addition to creating a composition program website that showcases our new program. We are hoping to work with the computer science department to do this.

In order for the composition program to be successful and to meet our outcome goals, we do need to hire a full-time composition faculty member. With only 2 full-time English faculty members, we rely heavily on adjuncts, and every semester we have great turnover in our adjunct faculty, and every semester, we have difficulty finding qualified instructors to fill the courses.

We also teach several Bonaventure courses in addition to composition courses and our English upper level courses, and to meet these outcomes, we also need one full-time literature professor as well, who can cover world literature and early British literature. We do not have anyone teaching full-time with this specialty, and it is an essential part of the English major and our Bonaventure courses. Having another full-time literature person would also work to reduce the

adjunct turnover, as most of our courses would then be covered by full-time members of the department. This would also enable us to grow our major by providing our faculty more opportunities to work closely with our students to ensure they succeed as we are better equipped to meet the outcome goals of our English and composition programs.

VII. Possible Changes in Assessment Methods for the Future

With the stabilization of our department with the addition of more faculty-time faculty, and as our composition program develops, we will have a better grasp on what assessment changes or modifications our program needs for the future.