

ASSESSMENT NEWS

Department of English, Literature + Reading | Wilbur Wright College

New Coordinator | Helen Doss, PhD

Greetings!

As some of you may know, I am the new assessment coordinator for the department. In this capacity, I am tasked with facilitating, coordinating and reporting the assessment activities of the department as they relate to the department's "assessment project" and the college's overall assessment plan.

Heretofore, Professor Vincent Bruckert served as assessment coordinator and worked on a project relating to the composition sequence's student learning outcomes (SLOs) and student competency relative to those enrolled in English 102. This project is coming to a close/transitioning to a new phase. For more information about it, please contact Professor Bruckert directly.

I look forward to serving the department in this capacity for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Helen Doss, PhD is an assistant professor of English within the department.



2014-2015 | Assessment Project

This year, the Department of English, Literature and Reading is reconceptualizing its exit process for English 101 in order to better reflect its commitment to assessing student learning, critical

thinking, critical reflective practice and professional development. This change in the exit process entails shifting from the *evaluation of student performance* to the *assessment of student learning* in the achievement of the student learning outcomes for English 101.

Additionally, a survey (24 September) of exit essay cohort chairs revealed a profound commitment to critical thinking as integral to writing (generally) and assessment of student writing in English 101 (specifically). Moreover, it revealed a significant interest in assuring that the tool with which the summative assessment for English 101 is reviewed focuses on critical thinking in an integrated, holistic and balanced manner, i.e., *a tool that reflects the degree to which critical thinking as both a process and a skill is embedded within the recursive writing process, not necessarily separate from it.*

Thus, the new department assessment project will explore the ways in which our students' learning experiences in English 101 reflect the degree to which they are developing and using critical thinking as part of the recursive process of writing (i.e., invention, drafting, reflection and revision) as well as the way, in turn, faculty can enhance and/or adapt our approaches to teaching this course in order to improve student use of critical thinking within the course.

Image: National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.
<http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/websiteoverview.html>

Preliminary Results, Conclusions + Next Steps | Assessment Survey

From 29 September to 13 October 2014, members of the department (76) had an opportunity to complete a twelve question survey on the connections among three discrete sets of data: English 101 student learning outcomes (SLOs); the criteria for successful completion of the English 101 exit essay; and, a faculty-generated list of key skills and metacognitive processes associated with critical thinking (CT).

Below, are the preliminary results and conclusions as well as next steps.

1. 41 faculty members completed the survey (54%); 90% of whom are members of a cohort; 42% of whom teach English 101 often (six or more sections in last six semesters); and, 82% of whom indicated a high degree of familiarity with the English 101 SLOs.
2. 100% of respondents indicated that CT is important to the completion of tasks associated with English 101.
3. Of all of the criteria for evaluating English 101 exit essays, thesis clarity and relevance; logical organization; and effective use of supportive evidence were the most important.
4. Of all of the English 101 SLOs, exposition and argument; critical thinking and reading; and, organization and development were the most important.

Preliminary Results *Continued*

5. Of all of the key skills and metacognitive processes associated with critical thinking, interpretation/analysis; logical thinking; forming sustained arguments with reasonable support; and, evaluation of college level materials were the most important.

6. The most highly correlated CT skills and exit essay competencies were those related to comprehension and recognizing complexity in academic materials with those associated with interpretation and analysis.

7. The most highly correlated English 101 SLOs and exit essay competencies were those related to recursive writing and academic purpose with those associated with logical organization and interacting meaningfully with academic texts.

8. The most highly correlated CT skills and English 101 SLOs were those related to interpretation/analysis beyond basic comprehension; forming sustained arguments with reasonable support; applying thoughtful rhetorical choices; and, evaluation of college level materials with those of exposition/argument and organization/development.

9. The highest correlation existed between CT skills and the English 101 SLOs.

Preliminary Conclusion(s)

The criteria with which we choose to review the summative assessment/critical essay for English 101 should reflect the areas of significant correlation and high rankings, especially those correlations that foreground the connection between English 101 SLOs and CT skills, given that 100% of respondents indicated the importance of CT skills in the completion of tasks associated with English 101.

Next Steps

November 2014: Textual analysis of critical thinking definitions from survey respondents.

November 2014: Deep analysis of the order in which the aforementioned corrections and highly ranked skills/competencies in order to establish preliminary priorities for assessing them in English 101's new summative assessment/critical essay.

December 2014/January 2015: Development of the preliminary assessment tool, which reflects the aforementioned preliminary correlations and rankings.

Spring 2015: Pilot of the preliminary assessment tool in conjunction with new English 101 summative assessment/critical essay.