

Introduction

Students will be able to make a written, oral or visual presentation that demonstrates comprehension of any source of information and that addresses the assigned topic, expresses a thesis, develops a sustained focus on the central idea, organizes ideas around the thesis and uses correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics.

Effective Communication is constituted of 10 parts:

1. Summary: Restates in student's own words main details of a text without opinions.
2. Paraphrase: The restatement of a text passage in students' own words without opinions.
3. Annotation: Detailed notes on a text
4. Outline: Restates in students' own words the main and supporting details of text
5. Task: Addresses the assigned topic
6. Central Idea: Expresses a central idea or thesis
7. Focus: Develops a sustained focus on the central idea
8. Organization: Logically organizes supportive ideas around the thesis
9. Correctness: Uses correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics
10. Citation: Documents sources of information using the accepted form

An assessment rubric was developed by the Effective Communication sub-committee of the Gen Ed work group (Appendix A).

Methods

In Spring 2014, two students were randomly selected from each faculty member teaching a course designated Writing Intensive.¹ Given the definition of Writing Intensive in the College Catalog, this seemed the best way to capture the goals associated with Effective Communication.

A Writing Intensive course is a college-level course designed to integrate the teaching of writing with the teaching of specific subject matter. Writing Intensive courses are offered across the curriculum and may overlap with other degree requirements. A Writing Intensive course should include the practice of general forms of academic or creative writing or the introduction of specific forms of academic writing common to the discipline or set of disciplines pertaining to the course. The course should approach writing as a process of planning, drafting, revising and editing.²

In total 231 students were selected. Emails were sent to these students informing them of their selection. Faculty received emails asking them to participate in a survey version of the rubric. Students were evaluated on a Likert Scale from 1 (Beginning) to 4 (Accomplished). There were 125 responses, 99 of which were usable. Two types of comparisons were performed: the averages for students in each SLO and percent of students ranked as at least Competent (3) in each SLO. These were compared to a similar survey which was conducted in 2010.³

¹ <http://www.ccp.edu/college-catalog/degree-requirements/degree-requirements-chart>

² <http://www.ccp.edu/college-catalog/degree-requirements#3>

³ <http://path.ccp.edu/IWAC/AAE.web/GenEdDocs/EffectiveCommunication/Effective%20Communication%20Fall%202010%20Assessment%20Report%2006-20-11.pdf>

Results

In all cases, more than half of students were evaluated as competent or better by faculty. (Figure 1) However, Focus, Correctness, Organization and Citation were the lowest of the 10, each in the sixties, while the remaining 6 factors had at least 70 percent competent. Interestingly, three of these (Focus, Organization, and Correctness) all had large gains since 2010.

All SLOs had an average score around 3 (Competent), ranging from 2.8 to 3.1. (Figure 2) Summary and Paraphrase had decreases from 2010, while Focus, Organization, Correctness, and Citation all increased in the same time period. Part of these differences may be related to the focus of the courses: English 101 centers more on these topics (Summary and Paraphrase) than a more content specific course would.

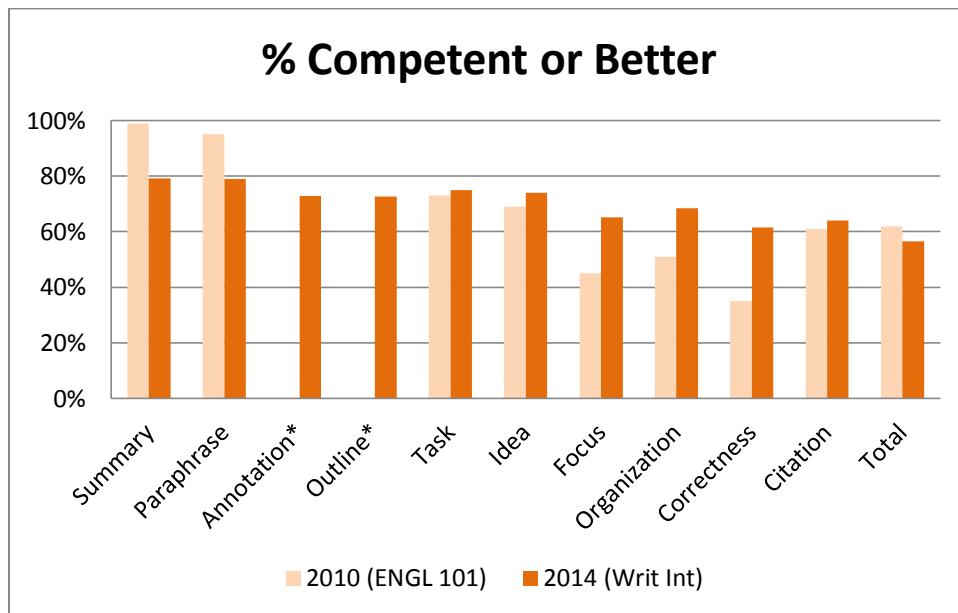
Feedback from faculty on this assessment showed an important trend. A small, but significant, number of faculty replied that they were unable to assess students using the provided rubric as they do not have the kind or number of writing assignments that would allow for an accurate determination. The sample below was, perhaps the most eloquent example (edited for anonymity), but the sentiment was shared by about a dozen other respondents.

I am sorry to disappoint, but I am unable to complete your survey as it appears to be. The only real writing I had students do in my class was essays for exams. My class was a [weekday] night 3 hour class. I truly enjoy teaching those classes as any student willing to take a class for 3 hours [during the week at] night is usually a motivated adult. But, this also means that they are also usually very pressed for time. I focused on class discussions rather than writing.

I will admit that I think [this class] should be more writing intensive than I currently make it. But, I am a realist. As an adjunct teaching at multiple universities I am disinclined to give myself the level of work this would require. I would like to do what I once did: one paper turned in three to four times over the course of the semester to help them with both [the subject], and writing and communication. I no longer do this. Not only was it an enormous amount of work for me, it often led to the students dropping the class. This may not help your survey, but if I can be of further help I would be happy to do so.

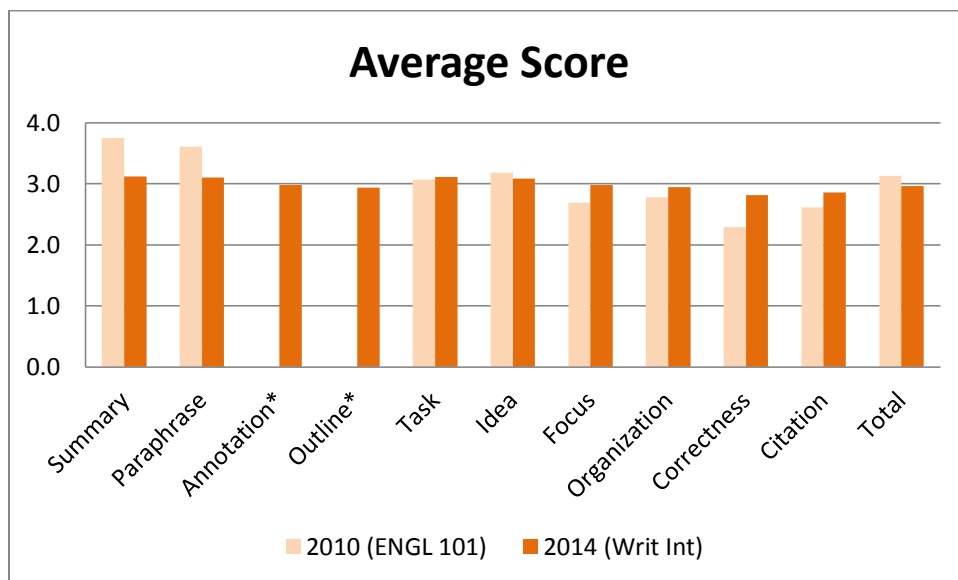
This poses some serious questions about the relationship between the Major Academic Approaches and the General Education. While not concretely aligned, it is generally assumed that writing intensive courses should be an opportunity to demonstrate competence in effective written communication.

Figure 1. Percent of Students ranked “Competent” (3) or Higher



*Annotation and Outline were not evaluated in 2010.

Figure 2. Average Score on each SLO



*Annotation and Outline were not evaluated in 2010.

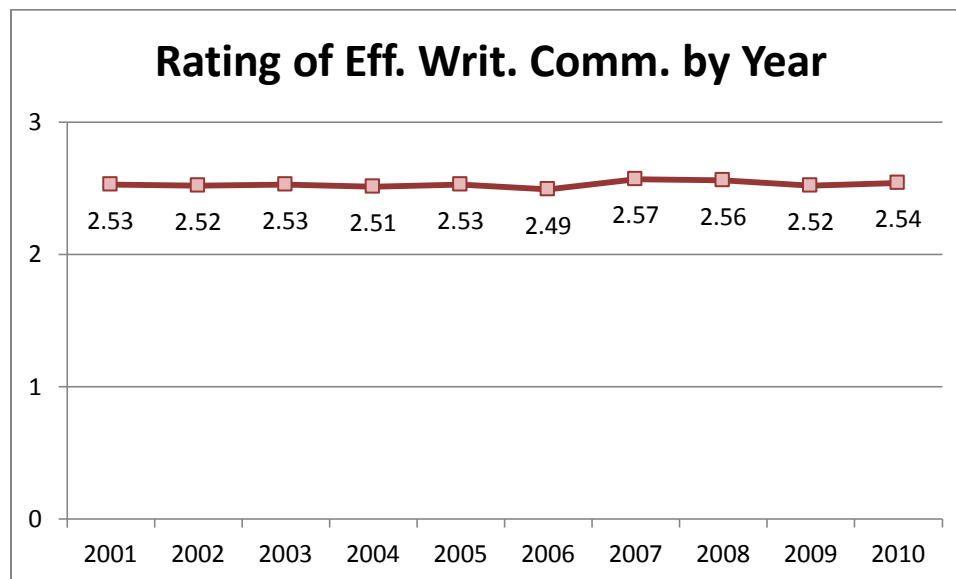
Prior Assessments

In Fall 2010 A pilot study of the Effective Communication core competency was conducted in six sections of English at the end of the Fall 2010 semester: one section of 098/099, three sections of English 101, and two sections of English 102. A total of 86 students were assessed; however, not all students were assessed on all skills. Suggestions from this assessment were that the course SLOs were not properly aligned with Effective Communication to perform an effective assessment of the Gen Ed outcomes.

Indirect Evidence

- Students have been higher levels of success in courses that fulfill the Writing Intensive requirement than in other general education areas (IR#195).⁴
- CCP students outperform their peers in believing the College helped develop their ability to write clearly and effectively (IR#191).⁵
- Writing clearly and effectively has the highest (self rated) gains score from entrance to graduation (IR#204).⁶ This number has remained fairly constant in the years between 2001 and 2010 (Figure 3) (IR#225).⁷

Figure 3: Graduates' Self-Reported Gains in Quantitative Reasoning*



*3=Considerable Progress, 2=Some Progress, 1=Little Progress, 0=No Progress

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Students are generally performing well in Effective Communication. Both direct (faculty assessment) and indirect (self reported gains) show students are gaining writing skills while at CCP.
- There is some concern that not all students are having equivalent experiences; several faculty disclosed that they were unable to assess their students due to lack of writing in the particular class.

1. Faculty need to review what qualifies as writing intensive. Are the requirements for these courses adequate to ensure that students are developing appropriate skills? How do these courses' SLOs align with the plan for Effective Communication outcomes?

2. An additional assessment on Communication should be conducted next year. A rubric has been created, but finding appropriate courses for this is a challenge; department heads will need to advise.

3. Effective Communication should be evaluated again in four years.

⁴ http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_195.pdf

⁵ http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_191.pdf

⁶ http://www.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_204.pdf

⁷ http://path.ccp.edu/VPFIN-PL/ir/ir_reports/ir_report_225.pdf

Appendix A: Effective Communication Rubric

Effective Communication Rubric

Criteria	Beginning	Developing	Competent	Accomplished
Summary: Restates in student's own words main details of a text without opinions.	Has no major supporting details, plagiarizes, includes opinions	Has some major supporting ideas, excessive phrasing from original, no opinions	Has most major supporting ideas, some phrasing from original, no opinions	Has all major supporting ideas entirely in the student's own words, no opinions
Paraphrase: The restatement of a text passage in students' own words without opinions.	Does not show understanding of text, is plagiarized, leaves out most of original content, contains opinion, does not convey original meaning	Shows partial understanding of text, includes mostly synonyms for original words, includes most of the original content, contains opinion, does not convey original meaning	Is written almost entirely in the writer's own words, includes most of the original content of text, contains opinion, does not convey original meaning	Shows clear understanding of text, is written entirely in the writer's own words, includes all the original content, does not contain opinion, conveys meaning of original
Annotation: Detailed notes on a text	Is written only in full sentences, combines main and supporting ideas completely copied from the original, unknown words are not defined	Is written only in full sentences, delineates few main from supporting ideas, does not include student's thoughts and connections to outside material, uses considerable phrasing from the original, unknown words are not defined	Mixes notes and full sentences, delineates some main ideas from supporting ideas, does not include student's thoughts and connections to outside material, uses some phrasing from the original, some unknown words are not defined	is written in short notes, delineates all main ideas from supporting ideas, includes most of the content of the original, contains no opinion, conveys meaning of original, unknown words are defined
Outline: Restates in students' own words the main and supporting details of text	Does not cover main ideas of original text, is written in phrases and sentences, does not distinguish main from supporting ideas, is paraphrased from original	Covers all main ideas of original text, is written in phrases and sentences, somewhat distinguishes main from supporting ideas, is paraphrased from original	Covers most main ideas of original text, is written mostly in phrases, mostly distinguishes main from supporting ideas, is paraphrased from original	Covers all main ideas of original text, is written in phrases, completely distinguishes main from supporting ideas, is written in student's own words
Task: Addresses the assigned topic	Addresses the topic in a very general nature or not at all	Addresses the topic with limited specificity	Addresses the topic in a specific, individual manner	Addresses the topic creatively with unique individual insights
Central Idea: Expresses a central idea or thesis	Implies a central idea or thesis through its content or not at all	States in its introduction a central idea or thesis drawn directly from the language of the assignment	States in its introduction a central idea or thesis that explores a logical relationship among parts of the assigned topic	States in its introduction a sophisticated and well-reasoned central idea or thesis that clearly establishes an order for ideas in the body of support
Focus: Develops a sustained focus on the central idea	Some or none of the parts develop the central idea	Most parts develop the central idea	All parts strengthen the focus of the central idea	All parts deepen the focus of the central idea

Organization: Logically organizes supportive ideas around the thesis	Some or none supporting ideas relate to the central idea or thesis	Most supporting ideas relate to the central idea or thesis	All supporting ideas relate to the central idea or thesis	All supporting ideas relate to and develop the central idea or thesis
Correctness: Uses correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics	Many errors in expression	Few errors in expression	No errors in expression	Exceptional use of diction, syntax, usage, grammar and mechanics in a polished style
Citation: Documents sources of information using the accepted form	Some or no sources are documented	Some sources documented in accepted form	Most sources documented in accepted form	All sources documented in accepted form