



Southwestern Student Learning Assessment Steps

EXAMPLE 1: Writing Discipline Achievement of the SWOCC Student Learning Assessment Outcomes Plan

1. **Map courses to Program/Discipline Outcomes.** The writing department has identified which courses meet which Writing Discipline Outcomes, and they have determined that each course does meet each of the Writing Discipline Outcomes.
2. **Map Program/Discipline Outcomes to General Student Learning Outcomes (GSLOs).** SWOCC has five **GSLOs** divided into the following areas: Communication; Computation; Creative, Critical, and Analytical Thinking; Community/Global Consciousness and Responsibility; and Discipline Content. The writing department has identified which Writing Discipline Outcome addresses which General Student Learning Outcome. The Writing Department also indicates which Writing Discipline Outcome introduces, reinforces, or measures the proficiency of the General Student Learning Outcome.
3. **Map assessment tools to Program/Discipline and Course Outcomes.** The Writing Department mapped the multiple assessment tools within the writing courses that contribute to assessing both the Writing Discipline Outcomes and GSLOs. A sampling of these outcomes include discussion, peer review, in-class writing, self-evaluation, assignment rubrics, workplace documents, academic documents, journals, and quizzes.
4. **Develop measurable tools and criteria for each Program/Discipline Outcomes.** The writing department is in the beginning stages of developing measurable tools and criteria for each Discipline Outcome. Two examples demonstrate possible models as patterns for scaled up department assessments. One model represents a faculty member's class assignment that measures students' learning for the specific Writing Discipline Outcome 2. The second model represents the department's united assessment of the specific Writing Discipline Outcome 2 including inter-rater reliability. Both the faculty member and the writing department have identified a measurable criteria for Writing Discipline Outcome 2:

A threshold of 80% of students will receive a C or better demonstrated with a minimum Level 3 on the criterion Context and Purpose of Writing and Content Development for the **Written Communication VALUE rubric**. Level 3 criterion for Purpose and Content Development include writing that "demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task by using appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within context of the discipline and shape the whole work".

The individual faculty member assessed a set of personal statements that served as a first week WR 123 diagnostic assignment during winter term 2015. The writing department also assessed a sampling of 50 WR 121 essays collected fall 2015 in connection with the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment project.

- 5. Record measurement data.** The faculty member and the writing department have recorded the following data collected from their measurable tools for Writing Discipline Outcome 2.

For the personal statement assignment, 88% of the students received a C or better with a minimum Level 3 on the criterion Context and Purpose of Writing and Content Development: 18% received A's (3 students); 29% received B's (5 students); 41% received C's (7 students); 6% received D's (1 student); 6% received F's (1 student).

Analysis of the 50 random samples from WR 121 assignments gathered for the MSC project reveal that 76% of the students received a C or better with a minimum Level 3 on the criterion Context and Purpose of Writing: 34% (17 students) scored Level 4; 42% (21 students) scored Level 3; 18% (9 students) scored Level 2; and 6% (3 students) scored Level 1.

In addition, 70% of the students received a C or better with a minimum Level 3 on Content Development: 30% (15 students) scored Level 4; 40% (20 students) scored Level 3; 20% (10 students) scored Level 2; and 10% (5 students) scored Level 1.

- 6. Analyze measurements data and verify benchmarks.** The faculty member and the writing department have analyzed the data collected from their measurable tools to Writing Discipline Outcome 2.

The personal statement assignment is a first week diagnostic writing assessment. Since WR 123 is a final course in the AA/OT writing foundational requirements, it is expected that students will write an apparent thesis statement supported by relevant detail, address a specific audience with a specific purpose, and express self through reflection and examples. From the Personal Statement Rubric, 82% demonstrated an apparent thesis statement, yet only 58% of the students focused on one or two concrete, relevant examples (many students used general, abstract examples). Although students had probably not written a personal statement prior to this assignment, 76% of the students did purposely write with the intent to share an accomplishment or experience that reveals character.

The 50 WR 121 student writing samples were randomly selected from sections participating in the MSC project. The analysis is divided into two sections: context of and purpose for writing and content development.

Context of and Purpose for Writing. Although the results of the outcomes assessment for context of and purpose for writing did not reach the 80% threshold, it did come near it with 76% of students scoring a Level 3 or Level 4 on the Written Communication VALUE rubric. It is encouraging that 42% demonstrated an "adequate consideration of context, audience and purpose" while 34% could demonstrate a "thorough understanding of context,

audience and purpose.” On the other hand, nearly one-fourth of the students (24%) were able to demonstrate only “an awareness of or minimal attention” to context, audience, and purpose.

Content Development. The results of the outcomes assessment in content development did not reach the 80% threshold but did measure that 70% of students were able to score a Level 3 or Level 4 on the Written Communication VALUE rubric. Of that 70%, 30% were able to “use appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate a mastery of the subject, conveying the writer’s understanding, and shaping the whole work” and 40% were able to “use appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.” On the other hand, nearly one-third (30%) of the students were able to use appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through “most of the work” or “some parts of the work.”

It also appears that the 80% threshold is realistic and measurable of students receiving a C or better demonstrated with a minimum Level 3 on the criteria Context and Purpose of Writing and Content Development for the Written Communication VALUE rubric. Although our students did not reach the threshold, they did come near it, suggesting we can provide students with more instruction and practice to reach the 80% threshold.

7. Adjust outcomes and curriculum as necessary—at course and/or program/discipline level.

The faculty member and the writing department have adjusted either the outcome or the curriculum based on data collected from their measurable tools to Writing Discipline Outcome 2 as described on the Program Assessment Report Form and below.

As a diagnostic assessment, the personal statement works well to allow students to introduce themselves to the instructor, celebrate a few accomplishments or experiences revealing character, determine how effectively students understand and complete an assignment independently of an instructor, and demonstrate college-level writing abilities. This assignment as a measurement tool reveals that students understand and demonstrate a thesis statement. However, their use of relevant and precise examples and support continues to need instruction and practice. Therefore, in all writing classes but specifically in WR 123, additional direct instruction and writing examples are necessary to prepare students to demonstrate skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources and examples to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.

As a method of gathering essays for assessment, the MSC project has worked well for the faculty. Even though they focused on writings from WR 121, the samples represented multiple assignments. This process allowed them to examine the criteria through multiple writing genres and activities. These assignments and measurement tool reveal that students understand and demonstrate context, audience, purpose, and content

development. However, in all writing classes but specifically in WR 121, additional direct instruction and writing examples are necessary to prepare students to demonstrate skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources and examples to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.

It is encouraging to note that 88% of WR 123 students did meet the threshold; whereas the WR 121 students did not reach the threshold. Therefore, it suggests that with additional writing instruction and practice achieved through WR 122 and WR 123 does provide students with additional opportunities to succeed in college-level writing.

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