

Course Assessment– Part B: Your Results & Analysis

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WR 122 English Composition – Tom Kaser – Winter 2016

Results

1a. Report the outcome achievement data gathered via the assignments, test, etc. you identified in question 3 of your Part A. *

I designed three main measures of achievement in this course, and I am satisfied that they worked well this term, as in previous terms I have taught this course:

1. Essays written outside of class. These were assessed for compositional and mechanical (grammar, punctuation) excellence. No matter how well a student did in WR 121, I have noticed that many students coming into WR 122 need further experience in writing clear, structured essays. Most of the first essays are merely satisfactory, and as students wrote successive essays in the course I watched for progress in compositional and mechanical skills, especially in argumentation. In almost all cases, grades for later papers exceeded those of previous papers.
2. Tests on grammar and punctuation. Most students coming into WR 122 need continuing development of these skills, and this course required that development. Grades on mechanics tests this term steadily improved for most students.
3. Commitment to learning, as evidenced by writing developed critiques of other students' essays, tests on commonly confused words, tests on writing concisely, take-home quizzes on MLA documentation, and quizzes on sample essays handed out in class. In almost all cases, the grades on these measures improved as the course progressed.

1b. Report the percentage of students who mastered each outcome that you identified in question 3 of your Part A.

Outcome #1 *

[Read closely and analytically to determine an author's purpose, perspective and use of rhetorical strategies.]

A number of sample essays--most written by former students in this course (some well written, some not), and one written by Martin Luther King Jr. ("Letter from Birmingham Jail")--were handed out, and students were asked to discuss and/write written reviews on these essays, judging their structure, clarity, rhetorical strategies, and the author's purpose.

% of students who successfully achieved the outcome: *

73%, for the MLK essay; 80%, on average, for other essays handed out.

Outcome #2 *

[Write persuasive essays that demonstrate a logical development of ideas and incorporate reasonable, credible evidence in support of a thesis.]

Students wrote four developed essays out of class, most dealing with persuasive writing.

% of students who successfully achieved the outcome: *

92%

Outcome #3 *

[Locate, evaluate and use information effectively and ethically to develop an informed position and encourage

intellectual curiosity.]

We spend considerable time in the course locating and evaluating information that could be used to support a thesis in an argumentative essay. (On the advice of college library staff, I no longer allow use of the Open Internet--websites--as sources for papers in this course. I have the college librarian demonstrate how to use databases to find sources. This eliminates mere web-surfing as a suitable research approach.) We also spent time (and had quizzes) on what needs--and does not need--to be documented, plus three open-book, take-home quizzes on using MLA format to document sources.

% of students who successfully achieved the outcome: * 100%

Reflect on you assessment results and provide analysis, considering what contributes to student success and/or lack of success. Include feedback from student course evaluations as appropriate. *

1. I have found that, while much of our in-class work is discussive in nature, with no measures of proficiency, students generally will take assignments more seriously and learn more when they know there will be a quiz on that material. Thus I am including more quizzes (even if just take-home or open-book) that I previously did.

2. This is a face-to-face class, and I have found that students who do poorly have had attendance problems. Thus I emphasize the importance of class attendance.

3. I believe in second (and sometimes third) chances, giving more weight to later papers and tests than earlier ones.

4. I believe in giving students ample feedback on their writing. On their papers, I make many markings with a green pen--comments, suggestions, compliments, and referrals to sections of our book where a mechanical problem is discussed. I also use a detailed rubric, with check-boxes, for each paper. I do not use numbers of percentages to grade papers, but my comments and the rubrics should leave no doubts about the paper's strengths and/or weaknesses.

STUDENT COMMENTS ON THE END-OF-COURSE EVALUATION:

I pay most attention to the evaluation's last two questions, which are mine--and I look for what more than one student is saying (rather than isolated comments).

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My first question (Question #6): I tried to give you ample feedback on each paper you wrote in this course. In the box below, please explain how you feel about the comments I made (with my green pen) on your papers and how useful the rubrics were.

Some sample, consistent responses:

* "The rubrics were very useful because on them you stated exactly what you expected from us. Your green pen comments were a little out of hand to me in the beginning to be honest, but now I am very thankful for all the feedback. The reason I felt like it was "out of hand" was because I was not used to that. In high school, my writing 121 teacher would barely write anything on my essays, which I now see how much help it really is so thank you!"

* "I appreciate all of the time you spent on our papers individually. This help me understand what i did wrong and how i can fix it."

* "The rubrics were very helpful for me to be able to make a checklist on what I have or don't have in the paper. Your comments were the best I've ever gotten from a teacher, because you gave me a resource to learn how to fix the mistake, instead of just telling me I made said mistake."

* "These comments were much needed. They do a great job in showing the errors that you have made in your paper. Also they do a great job at making you learn the material. The marks don't tell you exactly how to change [; instead, they] make you find the answers.

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My second question (Question #8): Assume that a friend is considering taking this course from me next term, and he/she asks you, "What most determines doing well in this course, in this class, and from this instructor?"

How would you reply?

Some sample, consistent responses:

- * "It is simple! Follow the assignment calendar, be organized and go to class!!!! If you come to class prepared to do what is clearly written on the assignment calendar and you study a little bit, You will do great !!"
- * " I would tell them that attending class, being prepared and using your assignment calendar will be the biggest help to you in being successful in the class. He isn't vague about anything that he wants done, and if you can follow simple instruction, you'll do fine. Participation was also a big factor in the class, whether you want to or not."
- * "I would tell them first to show up, second to be organized with all the handouts, and to read and do the book assignments. If you do the assignments on time you will be able to participate with the class discussions and learn from your mistakes if you missed any."

Based on your analysis in the questions above, what course adjustments are warranted (curricular, pedagogical, etc.)? *

I am always tweaking my writing courses--finding new ways to measure learning and making students take more responsibility for their learning. This usually involves documentable measurement of one sort or another. Just lecturing and assuming it is being comprehended and applied by the students isn't enough. My gradebook is full of indicators of student achievement (or not)--grades, check marks. I use these to also keep students informed how they are doing as the course progresses. No one should ever be "ambushed" by a bad grade.

What resources would be required to implement your recommended course adjustments (materials, training, equipment, etc.)? What Budget implications result? *

I make my own course materials and am constantly adding new ones and dropping (less effective) old ones to make the course more meaningful for each student. One thing I would like to find someday is an all-in-one, open-source text that is less expensive than the (otherwise excellent) text I now use. Everything I need--composition strategies, grammar/punctuation chapter, documentation chapters--is in the text I use; it's ALL there (and the publisher knows it). I am not hopeful I will be able to find a less-expensive alternative.

Were your assessment methods accurate indicators of student learning? Why or why not? Any additional comments?

I feel they were accurate because the more indicators I have inserted into the course, the easier it is to calculate grades. Coming up with objective measures in a writing course is always a challenge, but I have kept working at it over the years.

(OPTIONAL) Reflect on any adjustments you made from the last assessment of this course and their effectiveness in student achievement of outcomes?

I don't believe I have made an institutional assessment of this course in the past. I have made only my own, ongoing assessments, as I do each term, for every course I teach.

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