

# Course Assessment– Part B: Your Results & Analysis

#176

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## Part B: Your Results

### Directions

1. Report the outcome achievement data gathered via the assignments, tests, etc. you identified for each outcome (question 3) of your Part A. \*

To promote objective rather than subjective measurement of student performance, I have continually added more measures, both compositional and mechanical (grammar and punctuation), in this course. For the Fall Term 2016 running of this course, I had 31 measures, some major (e.g. papers) and some minor. In addition, on the second day of the course, I had each student take a "Diagnostic Test" measuring how much they knew of three important areas of grammar when they entered the course. (Their performance on the initial diagnostic test is not considered for any part of their final grade.) Throughout the term, I taught to these areas; I made note of them on students' papers, and near the end of the course I had the class do a thorough review of the three grammar areas as shown in our textbook. Then, the second-last day of the class, I had the students take the "diagnostic test" again, and on the last day of the class I gave both tests back to the students. Almost always, student performance is poor the first time the diagnostic test is given. In the Fall 2016 term, 11 of the 13 students who took the diagnostic test both times (beginning and end) would have received an "F" if I were grading that test (the two remaining students would have received a C-). The second time students in this class took the (same) test, 10 of the 13 students received an A or B. For the class as a whole, the average class score rose from 6.0 (out of 15 questions) on the first test to 12.7 on the second test, a 111% improvement.

### Outcome #1

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I applied several measures of students' understanding of the structure of a well-written essay, especially a developed introduction, including a clear thesis sentence. I also applied measures of purposeful, developed body paragraphs, each with one central idea (called paragraph unity) and a topic sentence expressing that idea. Regarding introductions, I paid particular attention to the introductions student wrote for the final paper of the course, The Research Paper, for we covered a lot about introduction in the course up that point. For the Research paper introductions, 11 of the 13 students wrote satisfactory introductions, which I noticed was a much higher achievement level than in earlier papers they wrote in this course. For body-paragraph development, I spent some time giving the students exercises on identified paragraph unity (one central idea per body paragraph) and writing clear, developable topic sentences expressing that idea. I noticed that topic sentences on the earlier papers in the course were often unsatisfactory. Later in the course, I gave the students two quizzes on identifying good topic sentences. In both tests, roughly eight of the 13 students got an A or B on the test, a marked contrast to earlier performance. I have found in my teaching that just one lecture, one reading assignment, one test is not enough to ensure understanding; there must be repeated teaching of important points. That is one reason I have built up to 31 measures in this course.

<p>% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) *</p>	<p>I can only take an average of performance on the most important of the measures, and that average for this course in the Fall Term 2016 was approximately 69%.</p>
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### Outcome #2 \*

Although I spend part of the course addressing mechanical issues of writing (grammar and punctuation), the most important part of writing is the compositional in nature--developing ideas clearly, completely, and concisely. That is

why this outcome must necessarily address performance on the papers written for this course. I feel if the course is taught correctly, student improvement on the four major papers in this course (plus other writing, done in class) will be evident. And it was, in this Fall Term of 2016. Of the 13 students who successfully completed the course, all received a grade of C or higher on at least two of their papers--and for most students, grades rose from paper to paper, indicating comprehension of the point IA had made to them on their previous papers.

**% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) \*** 100% of the students who completed the course.

### Outcome #3 \*

Again, the emphasis here is on the final paper of the course, The Research Paper (using the MLA style of documentation). Although it is possible to write a research paper that is just a report, or an analysis, I insist that my students go one step further and writing an argument paper--arguing a thesis--for it is clear that this is the most common type of writing they will be asked to do in higher courses of their college education. To ensure understanding of documentation standards and what makes a good argument paper, I teach important points to my students, then give them quizzes to measure their comprehension of those points. (I find that when students know they will be tested on material presented and discussed in class, they will be more attentive to it, and grades on these measures improve as a result.) For the research paper, I have found that the more I give students these measures of their understanding of research procedures, the better the quality of the research paper they hand in. Among the measures I have found to be particularly helpful are quizzes titled "What Needs--and Does Not Need--to Be Documented," "The Basics of a Good Research Paper," a mini-research assignment based on a tutorial (provided by college library staff) for using the college's databases, and having students write developed critiques of sample research papers (written by previous students in the course). One of my most important measures is a "Quiz on the Basics of a Good Research Paper." Of the 14 students who took that quiz, 10 received a B or A, which exceeds the 65% expectation I have for performance on that measure.

**% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) \*** 100% of the 12 students who turned in a research paper received a C or better, qualifying them for receiving a C or better as a final grade (one of my requirements for this course)

## ANALYSIS

### 3. What contributed to student success and/or lack of success? \*

I require all of my students to do a course evaluation at the end. One of the questions I ask them to comment on is this: "Assume that a friend knows you have just taken this course and asks you, "Did you learn much about writing in this course? Why or why not?" How would you reply (being more specific than just "yes" or "no")? " There are usually several "common thread" answers to this question. For this class in the Fall Term if 2016, here are some comments students gave to this question: "If a friend asked if I had learned much in the course I would say I definitely did. Proper structure of essays and sentences was an important topic of the class which helped me become a better writer. The grammar test throughout the semester also helped to touch up any grammatical faults I was commonly making." "I would say "yes." This course has given me verbal and visual examples to help me in my writing. Also the expectations were clear as to what was expected, which help me to write clear and concise papers." "I would say I learned a lot in this course. My grammar was poor and my papers were not very structured prior to taking this course. I have spent the last ten years abbreviating everything in my charting, so it was challenging. My grammar has now improved and my papers are easy to follow." "I would say that I did learn a lot in this course. The professor was great at describing the assignment and the criteria for each of them. The material was also not hard to understand." "Absolutely! Weed killing was a big thing for me, I write very "wordy" papers. And knowing exactly how to do things correctly, and where to look in the book for examples."

### 4. Helping students to realistically self-assess and reflect on their understanding and progress encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Consider comparing your students' perception of their end-of-term

**understanding/mastery of the three outcomes (found in student evaluations) to your assessment (above) of student achievement of the three outcomes. \***

Again, I look at common-thread (rather than isolated) comments on a course evaluation I asked all students in this class to complete at the end of the course. To help measure outcomes, I asked students how effective was the feedback they received from me in this course--especially on their papers. Among the common-thread comments: " The comments were useful to me because they helped show me what I did wrong in my writing and what I needed to do fix my mistakes. The rubrics were useful to me because they told me what my assignments needed to be like." "Very! I enjoyed that you told us where to look in the book for the correct thing, that was very helpful. And I enjoyed the classmate critiques!" "I found your feedback quite useful. They pointed out errors and gave us an opportunity to correct them, so as not to make the same errors in the future. The rubrics were also useful, as they stated clearly what was expected of each paper." " The rubrics gave a clear standard of how the papers should be written. We had all the information we needed and to follow to make sure our papers were written well. Not meeting what the rubrics were asking for would be of the students own negligence. And once we received feedback on our papers, it was clear what needed to be fixed."

**5. Did student achievement of outcomes meet your expectations for successfully teaching to each outcome (question 4 from Part A) \***

Yes. I ahve been teaching this course for many years, and every time I teach it I "tweak" it a little more. It is gratifying to develop course materials that "work," and I can always tell when they are working in the classroom.

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

I use a textbook that is a one-stop source for everything my students need to know about expository writing. We work our way through several chapters in that book. In addition, I give my students many supplementary materials; I am known/infamous for giving my students a lot of hard-copy handouts. I have found that just lecturing, or just showing information on the overhead projector, is not enough. Students have said (in evaluations of this course) that they want hard copies they can mark on and take home. Thus I have developed many handouts I use as teaching materials--exercises, quizzes, drills, tutorials. Good teaching cannot be static.

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

The development of ever more, and effective, teaching materials is an on-going process. Ever time I teach this course, I am adding new materials (and sometimes deleting old ones that are not working). I do not need further resources--and certainly not anything that would cost money for the college.

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

It is difficult to measure--with percentages, for example, student growth in abstract endeavors like writing and critical thinking. But in the papers I assign and the 31 measures I have built into this course, I can get a clear idea of student learning. One particular measure that has helped--and which I didn't start using until about 10 years ago--is rubrics for student papers. These rubrics contain many boxes that I check to indicate student achievement in various aspects of writing. These rubrics are much more specific than the general comments, and a grade, I sued to give (although I still provide both on the papers).

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

I have tried to cover this in the above coments I have made.

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