

# Course Assessment– Part B: Your Results & Analysis

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Your Email \*

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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. (Only include data for students who completed the course. Do not include students who withdrew or earned an incomplete) Data for all 3 outcomes should be reported below. \*

We who teach developmental-education courses (such as WR90) have discussed in department meetings how frustrated we all feel in teaching these courses, for two reasons: (1) Ours being a community college, we receive many entry-level students who are woefully unprepared for academic work, and (2) Many of those students (some of whom have learning disabilities) are challenged to absorb and retain information that is taught to them. Every time I teach WR90, I find myself "backing up," creating new remedial materials, spreading out the teaching (or a specific writing skill) over several class sessions for reinforcement purposes, and, yes, lowering grading standards for these impaired students. For my Fall Term 2018 WR 90 courses, I had 26 graded assignments, some major, some minor--the most I have ever used on this course. My teaching style is to give endless encouragement and reassurance to these students, but I am constantly reminding them that they need a final grade of C or better in order to satisfy the pre-req for this course and enroll in WR115. Of the 15 students who completed this class, two received an A, four received a B, five received a C, four received a D, and none received an F. In previous terms I have taught this course, there were more D's and F's than this time around, and I credit that improvement to stepped-up teaching reinforcement, added teaching materials (especially no-grade exercises), and new, no-grade "preview quizzes" before the "real" quiz or test is given.

### Outcome #1

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Of the 15 students who completed the course, 11--or 73%--received a final grade of C or higher. This is the highest achievement level I have had so far in teaching this course. Previous times I have taught this course, the proportion receiving a C or high as a final grade was usually 50% to 60%. All of my teaching in this course directly addresses my stated Outcome #1: to communicate in writing using a variety of sentence structures, paragraphs, and short forms that emphasize correct grammar, punctuation, coherence, and clarity. Students practice this in a variety of paragraph-writing assignments (sometimes one paragraph, moving on to two paragraphs later in the course). Our textbook (which is actually a workbook, with many exercises) lays out four basic steps in writing, and we practice those steps in exercises and writing assignments.

<b>% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) *</b>	73%--received a final grade of C or higher. This relates both to this outcome and to the course in general, since the same qualities are measured throughout the course.
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### Outcome #2 \*

One of the reasons I like the workbook we use in this course is its exercises relating to paragraph development, and this relates directly to my second chosen outcome: to demonstrate critical thinking in written responses to text. Some of the presented paragraphs are undeveloped, lack examples, and only "tell" rather than "show" with supporting details. Other paragraphs have the opposite problem: they contain information that does not directly support the paragraph's topic sentence. These exercises require the student to think analytically and critically, and we spend considerable class time discussing them. Initially, I do not grade students' responses to these critical-thinking exercises, but later I do grade them. I postpone the grading to allow students to grasp critical-thinking concepts and learn from their mistakes. I have found that those students who have

attended class regularly and are present mentally (not just physically) improve in their performance on these exercises.

**% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) \*** 67%

### **Outcome #3 \***

As mentioned earlier, four textbook has separate chapters for Four (Basic) Steps of Writing, and I tell my students they must know how to use those steps when they are composing a good essay (not just in this course but in WR115 and WR121 as well). I have composed graded tests for each of those steps; I have also stepped up pre-test teaching to those steps (again, because I have found that WR90 students usually don't "get it" in one pass-through; thus I spread out the teaching of these steps over several class sessions). I have noticed that as I have been doing this added reinforcing, student performance on the tests has generally improved.

**% of students who successfully achieved the outcome (C or above) \*** 72%

## **ANALYSIS**

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

I see these reasons as contributing to student success in this face-to-face course: (1) Attending every class and being engaged in the course. As I tell the students in the syllabus, regular class attendance counts toward their final grade; if they are absent, they will miss importance reinforcing instruction. (2) Developing effective study skills. Many students new to college have poor study skills, and we spend time in this course discussing strategies for absorbing and retaining information. (3) Learning from their mistakes. ("Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.") I tell my students that "this is a course of many second (and sometimes third and fourth) chances"; that there will opportunities to stumble without being graded; and that more weight will be given to (better) performance later in the courses rather than (poor) performance early in the course.

### **4. Helping students to realistically self-assess and reflect on their understanding and progress encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Please compare 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. \***

In all of my courses, I have been employing a strategy that shows students how much they have learned: without announcing it in advance, I give "before" and "after" measures using the same test. For example, in our second class session, I have the students take a "Diagnostic Test" with these instructions at the top: "This is a diagnostic test. You will not be graded on it. If you know, or think you might know, the one correct answer for each of the 15 items on this test, mark it on your Scantron form. If you have no idea what the answer is, don't make a wild guess, and don't make any mark on the Scantron form for that item." What the students don't know (yet) is that this is the same test (word-for-word) they will take late in the course as Part I of our two-part Final Exam. Part I covers three chapters in our book: Ch. 35 (Apostrophes), Ch. 37 (Commas) and Ch. 42 (Commonly Confused Words). Both tests (among others) are handed back to the students at our last class, and students can see how much they have learned. In this Fall Term of WR 90, 13 (87%) of the 15 students who took both tests did better--usually, much better--than they did on the "diagnostic test." Another before-and-after measurement using the same test related to the use of the apostrophe, a particularly troublesome punctuation mark. Before we studied the chapter in our book relating to apostrophes, I gave the students a diagnostic questionnaire involving the use of the apostrophe (or not) in their own name. Of the 15 students who did the questionnaire both times, about half improved in their knowledge of the apostrophe--not impressive improvement but perhaps remarkable for students at this level of writing (and again, knowing the difference between plurals and possessives is a challenge for almost everybody; I go into it in more detail in WR121).

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

Gradually, yes. While I am making progress in teaching effectiveness in WR90, I--and other instructors--despair and not being able to "reach" more students. We keep telling ourselves that this is a community college, receiving a wide range of students.

### **6. Based on your analysis in the questions above, what course adjustments are warranted (curricular, pedagogical,**

student instruction, etc.)? \*

(1) Continual development of new course materials--exercises, primers, diagnostics--to enable students to practice what they have learned about writing. (2) Ever more encouraging and reassuring these students new to higher education. (3) Constant reevaluation of grading for tests, quizzes, mid-terms, and final exams. "What can we rightfully expect of these students?" is a question I am always asking myself. It's a hard target to define. Although WR90 is only a 3-credit course (it should be 4), I find that I spend more time on this course than I do on WR 115 and WT 121, both of which are 4-credit courses.

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7. What resources would be required to implement your recommended course adjustments (materials, training, equipment, etc.)? What Budget implications result?      Aside from making this important course 4 credits, I see nothing more that the college can do to make WR90 more effective. In my opinion, that rests solely in the dedication, skill, and commitment of the faculty who teach this course.

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8. Reflect on any adjustments you made from the last assessment of this course (if applicable) and their effectiveness in student achievement of outcomes. \*      I don't recall having been asked to do an outcomes assessment of this course when I have taught it previously.

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9. Describe how you explain information about course outcomes and their relevance to your students.      Outcomes are included in my syllabus and discussed the first day of the course. I am not the only faculty member, by the way, who feels course outcomes are way too broad and have little meaning to most students.

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10. Please describe any changes/additions to instruction, curriculum or assessment that you made to support students in better achieving the CGCC Core Learning Outcomes:

CLO #1: Communication. The areas that faculty are focusing on are: "Source and Evidence" and "Organization and Presentation" and

CLO #2: Critical Thinking/Problem Solving. The areas that faculty are focusing on are: "Student's Position" (Critical Thinking) and "Evaluate Potential Solutions" (Problem Solving).

CLO #4: Cultural Awareness. The area that faculty is focusing on is: "Curiosity" – Encouraging our students to "Ask deeper questions about other cultures and seek out answers to these questions"

I'm not sure I understand this broad-brush question. the parts I do understand about it were covered in answers to previous questions.

We faculty talk--a lot--about these assessments and how frustrating they are for us. We believe in accountability, but many of the questions we are asked to answers are, like the outcomes themselves, overly broad and not readily quantifiable. The more these assessments head in that direction, the less faith we faculty have in them.

Here are comments from my Fall Term WR 90 student evaluations that I selected as representative of what current and former students have said. (I don't put a whole lot of credence in comments not echoed by other students.)

[Did the course syllabus or other orientation materials provide clear standards for grading of assignments, quizzes, and tests?]

The directions were really clear and easy to understand. If there was a spot where I was confused it was easy to ask for questions.

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[On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your level of understanding and/or ability to: communicate in writing using a variety of sentence structures, paragraphs, and short forms that emphasize correct grammar, punctuation, coherence, and clarity.]

At the beginning of the term I didn't know as much; all my essays were full of run-ons and I was desperate to fix them. Since the teacher explained really well how to avoid them, I was finally able to fix some of my errors and I started getting better grades in my essays.

At that start it was confusing to understand [writing], but now, at the end, my understanding and ability is very good

because I learned.

I learned so much taking this course. Before I started [it], I thought I knew everything I needed to know to be an efficient writer, but I learned so much, [such as] "sentence sense," apostrophes, and commonly confused words.

[Writing] was a challenge for me at the beginning of this course, but now it's like second nature.

I think this course helped me better understand how to compose a really good essay.

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[In this course, how much more do you think you learned about writing than you knew when you began the course? Why, or why not, was that so?]

I think I now know like about 80% more about writing than I knew before [I took the course].

I've learned about apostrophes and where to use them correctly in a sentence. [Before I took this course] I didn't have any idea how to use apostrophes correctly.

I learned a lot [in this course]. When I started the class, I had no idea of some of the things the teacher was teaching. It was a little difficult at first, but then I started getting it.

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