

Course Assessment- Part B: Your Results & Analysis

COMPLETE

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WR 115- Introduction to Expository Writing- Tom Kaser -Fall 2021

*** 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.**

This was an unusual WR 115 class in that it was only eight students, half of whom were still in high school. It is normal for a few students to withdraw as the term progresses, but in this class no one withdrew; I ended up with the same eight students. I attribute this to the encouragement I try to give students, assuring them they can complete the work and the course successfully if they will apply themselves and come to every class. Also, with this small class, I was able to provide more one-on-one help, not only at The Writing Desk but in special one-on-one tutoring I was able to provide to students at the Hood River campus if they missed a class and/or could not come to The Writing Desk. I was able to do this because I live only two blocks from the Hood River campus. All of these efforts resulted in a higher student achievement than I otherwise would have seen.

*** Outcome #1**

Read to determine a writer's purpose and perspective: I place a high priority on purposeful writing--the reader deserves to know the writer's purpose from the onset. I worked with students to ensure that their paper's purpose was evident in a thesis sentence contained in the paper's introduction. In my teaching, I prefer "showing" rather than just "telling," so I gave students examples of purposeful (and purposeless) writing as contained in previous (anonymous) students' papers. I want students to clearly determine a writer's purpose and perspective. Student evaluations for this course indicate these efforts were successful. Commented one student: "This course has helped me decipher what is the main idea [purpose] of any writing." Commented another: "Writing/English is an area I wasn't comfortable with. This course had helped me understand both what to do and not to do when writing essays, and how to check for errors easily made."

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

100%

*** Outcome #2**

Write coherent essays that develop ideas in support of a thesis: As mentioned earlier, I emphasized the importance of developing a clear, specific thesis sentence in the introduction of a paper. We looked at good and bad thesis sentences I have culled from previous students' papers--and discussed why they are good or bad. We discussed how good thesis sentences must be clear and developable--therefore an opinion or claim that needs support (to be given in the body of the paper). We discussed what the bad ones were bad--for example, they just stated a fact (which is already true and needs no support), or were just an announcement (e.g. "The purpose of this paper is . . .") rather than a declarative, developable point, or were vague. Comments from two students indicate these teaching efforts were successful. One student said: "I have learned how to develop paragraphs, write meaningful topic sentences, and organize my writing." Another said: "Although my essay writing ability can be improved, I've learned the importance of writing a structured essay." Throughout the course, I assured students that they have plenty of freedom to express themselves, to develop their writing "voice," and I emphasized they can most effectively do this through clear, concise, structured writing, which includes the presence of a good thesis sentence in the introduction and a clear, developable topic sentence in each body paragraph.

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

100%

* Outcome #3

Paraphrase, summarize, and synthesize information effectively and ethically in order to integrate and connect other writers' ideas with one's own: Documentation--correctly and ethically using other writers' ideas and words in one's own writing--is covered more extensively in WR 121 and WR 122, but I did introduce the basics of documentation in this introductory course. We examined ways to easily and accurately paraphrase. We also talked about the one documentation error that most students don't know about: not documenting a paraphrase or summary of someone else's thinking or writing. (Their common erroneous assumption is that "as long as you express someone else's thinking or writing in your own words, you don't have to document it.")

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

100%

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

I repeatedly emphasized--in the syllabus and in our class sessions--what I have observed as the main determinants of student success in my writing classes: regular class attendance (students who are absent miss instruction and reinforcement); being an active student rather than a passive student; setting priorities and addressing them first; asking questions when they don't understand ("There is no such thing as a dumb question," I often say); speaking up, respectfully, when they don't agree with something that has been stated in class or in a sample essay we are discussing; always reinforcing what we have covered in class; paying attention to comments I made on their papers. Were these and other efforts successful? Here are some student comments from evaluations of this WR 115 class:

* "All of the comments Mr. Kaser pointed out in my papers made sense. Although we possibly weren't going over a certain chapter, he still brought them to my attention. This was helpful in not making the same mistakes."

* "I appreciated the feedback. I thought it was clear and concise."

* "The comments made it easy to tell and what I did wrong and how I could make it better."

* "It was useful since you would tell us what page in the book could help us with the problem."

* 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.

Here is what one student said in the evaluations for this course: "If I was able to make a scale from one to ten [of what I knew about writing], I began the course at 2 or 3 out of 10. Finishing the course, I feel more comfortable analyzing essays and proficiency in writing. I now am at about 9 out of 10."

Other comments from students enrolled in this class:

* "I think I learned way more [about writing]. The handouts and lectures helped me out the most."

* "I know a lot more about grammar and how to write developed and organized paragraphs. This course was really fun and I am glad I chose it. I will be recommending this course to anyone who asks! Thank you!"

* "I have learned a lot about writing. I worked hard on the homework, and I studied. I applied myself to this course. I took an active approach."

* "I think I learned a lot more about writing than what I knew [at the beginning of the course], and it's because of all the handouts, quizzes, and how you would explain the chapter as we were on it."

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

Even though it is difficult if not impossible in a writing course to measure exact percentages of improvement, I couldn't help but notice individual indications improvement.

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

I am always considering new ways of improving student accountability--of their taking more charge of their learning. One area that is especially important is reinforcement. Few students grasp and retain teaching based on one exposure, one class, one presentation. That's why I always am recapped what we previously covered.

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

Another thing I have learned is that in a writing course, "bells and whistles" classroom activities--e.g. multi-media presentations--is of little value. It's true that some students are visual learners, etc., but there is nothing that beats discussions.

*** 8. Describe the results of any adjustments you made from the last assessment of this course (if applicable) and their effectiveness in student achievement of outcomes.**

I am always making adjustments to my courses, noting what is working and what is not. Almost all of the materials I use in my courses are in my computer, and I can easily make changes. The syllabus, especially, is always changing, not only to follow the college's expectations of what should be included but also because I want students to know to know exactly what is expected of them. (Remarked one student in this term's evaluations: "I thought the syllabus was clear and concise." In addition to the syllabus, I give students a 10-page Assignment Calendar that shows what we will be doing in every class. Over the years, students have remarked how this shows them what is expected of them in any given class, what they missed if they were absent, and how they can work ahead if they wish. In the evaluations for this term's course, one student said: "The syllabus did give clear standards for the class. It also gave us a timeline [the Assignment Calendar] for the class." Said another student in this term's evaluations: "Nothing was a surprise in Mr. Kaser's class. I often referred back to the syllabus whenever I needed to prepare for the class or next class."

9. Describe how you explain information about course outcomes and their relevance to your students.

The intended outcomes for this course are stated in the syllabus. I have long felt that course outcomes are way too general and need to be more specific if they are to be meaningful to students; in the meantime, I spend time early in the course emphasizing what I feel the vague outcomes are intended to mean.

10. Please describe any changes/additions to instruction, curriculum or assessment that you made to support students in better achieving the CGCC Institutional Learning Outcomes: ILO #1: Communication. The areas that faculty are focusing on are: "Content Development"and/or Control of Syntax and Mechanics" and ILO #2: Critical Thinking/Problem Solving. The areas that faculty are focusing on are: "Student's Position" (Critical Thinking) and "Evaluate Potential Solutions" (Problem Solving). ILO #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" ILO #5: Community and Environmental Responsibility. The area that faculty are focusing on are: "Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Contexts" and "Understanding Global Systems" ILO#3 -Quantitative Literacy - "Application/Analysis" and/or "Assumptions"

Lastly, I would like to present more comments from this course's student evaluations:

*"I've learned a lot in this class. Mr. Kaser is an excellent teacher."

* "Finding the main point of a paragraph/essay has always been challenging to me. Through this course, I have been able to use process of elimination by crossing out unnecessary sentences to finding the topic sentence or main idea of a paragraph/essay."

*"I learned a lot while taking this course; at first I struggled using punctuation, and now I have learned how to use it. This is because the teacher called on me for answers made me feel like I needed to study more to get the answers correct."