

Year 4 Core Assessment Written Communication

Overview of Assessment:

The committee was tasked with assessing the Core Perspective: Written Communication (W). To do this, we examined syllabi from both the Gallatin College Corequisite WRIT 101/001 and the MSU WRIT 101 courses. The perspective reads as follows: Written Communication courses develop written and verbal communication skills in ways that will facilitate success at communicating knowledge, ideas and information clearly and effectively in academic, workplace and community settings. Additionally, the committee decided to follow-up on the recent Core Quality assessment and also evaluated the syllabi via the MSU quality of Effective Communicator. It reads follows: Graduates use written, spoken, and visual

communication to create meaning, build relationships, foster understanding, and persuade. They express their ideas in manners appropriate for their intended audience and for their intended context. Graduates collaborate with others by openly and constructively giving and receiving feedback and use that feedback to revise and improve their own communication. They demonstrate facility in analyzing, interpreting, and understanding sources of information and in constructing persuasive arguments in ways that empower and challenge their own and other's thinking.

Methods: We created two assessments: one for the Core Perspective and one for the Core Quality. Since the Core Committee recently assessed the Core Quality using student artifacts, we tweaked the previous assessment (Qualtrics Survey) that focused on student artifacts to better fit a study of syllabi. The Corequisite course, which is a 5-credit set of courses WRIT 101/001, has a common syllabus (though instructors can modify with approval). As such, we examined the current syllabus and a new pilot. WRIT 101, MSU, has shared curriculum, but faculty have some freedom to develop the syllabus as long as it meets outcomes and curriculum agreements. As such, we each assessed six different instructor syllabi from that course. We completed a Microsoft Forms survey for each artifact. As such, we have a total of 24 surveys for the Core Perspective and 24 surveys for the Core Quality. For clarification on some syllabi, we referred to specific assignments as supplied by Kyndra Campbell and Rebecca Jones.

Results: Overall, we found that all of the syllabi met the spirit and basic parameters of the Core Perspective and Core Quality. In assessing the Core Perspective, we did note that most of the classes did not specifically address all of the genres listed in the final sentence: "academic, workplace and community settings." While all classes cover a variety of academic genres and some community genres (especially considering public arguments), WRIT 101 does not directly focus on writing in workplace genres. While audience focused writing projects provide clear foundation for workplace writing, this was not the specific focus of assignments in those courses. At MSU, these workplace and professional writing genres are covered in WRIT 201 and WRIT 221. At Gallatin College, they are covered in WRIT 104 and WRIT 121.

For the Core Quality, we noted that most of the syllabi addressed desired outcomes that are basic to many university writing courses. Namely, writing courses at MSU encourage critical thinking, communication with various audience, multiple genres, revision, peer review, and collaboration. This quality also includes specific mention of persuasion as a desired outcome. The only notable issue is that

the WRIT 101/001 OER syllabus does not explicitly state persuasion as a learning outcome. However, activities in the course do meet this requirement. The WRIT 101/001 pilot course has a more direct and clear focus on persuasion. Additionally, not all writing courses emphasize verbal communication, so it is notable that both the Corequisite and MSU courses require at least one presentation as well as significant group work and classroom conversation. While the Corequisite courses and MSU WRIT 101 have somewhat different curricula, they do seem to achieve the student outcomes as listed by the perspective and quality.

The questions and results, as both numbers and pie charts, are included below in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Recommendations: The Core Perspective offers very basic requirements for a writing course including developing writing and verbal communication skills that can be shared. As such, we spent time talking about bigger issues beyond the perspective and quality.

Scope of WRIT 101: Shannon Arnold, an outside reviewer, noted that the courses seemed to cover an enormous amount of material, concepts, and skills. Kyndra and Rebecca agree. In developing curriculum for this course, there is often a feeling that things move too fast and that so much has to be covered in 15 weeks (reading, research, and argumentation). Most universities require at least two writing courses. The most common practice is that students are required to take a two-course sequence their Freshman year. This sequence allows students who need to update and expand their writing skills to do it at a slower pace and for advanced students to exempt the initial course and move directly into a course focused on college level research writing. Other universities (this is preferable) require writing courses across a student's academic career and provide a variety of options at the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior levels.

Retention/Placement/DWF Rates: After the Covid rebound, WRIT 101 continued to experience higher than normal DWF rates and lower retention. Many national organizations and students are beginning to account for skill deficits due to the pandemic that will have continued effects in early Core Classes.

Recommendations: We recommend that all students take at least one writing course at MSU and that we move toward a wider variety of options before and beyond WRIT 101. A first step would be to make WRIT 201 and WRIT 221 a part of the Core and serve as options for students who exempt. A next step would include course options for students that additional practice. In a two-course sequence, WRIT 101 would serve as onboarding. In other iterations, we can imagine versions of WRIT 101 that include studio sections or small group recitations.

We also recommend that resources be allocated to assessing and updating our placement system as this might be part of the retention issue, since we have recently changed our system and may be changing it again as MUS system focuses on placement across the system. Finally, resources need to be allocated to reducing course caps which are currently at 22 for MSU courses when 15 per class is the standard recommendation by [national organizations](#). Several presentations at a recent MUS conference (April, 2023) demonstrated that reducing course caps significantly improves DWF rates. Most seminar classes, that don't include as much writing and intervention, are at a lower cap than the Core Communication requirement.

APPENDIX A

W Core Assessment – Written Communication – Results
Spring 2023

1 Does the syllabus demonstrate assignments and activities that encourage the practice of clear writing in all three categories: academic, workplace, and community settings?

- Provide clear opportunities for all three genres 11
- Provide some opportunity but only in two genres 12
- Provide opportunity in only one genre 1



What writing genre is dominant?

- Academic 24
- Workplace 0
- Community 0



2 Does the syllabus demonstrate assignments and activities that encourage the practice of clear verbal communication in all three categories: academic, workplace, and community settings?

- Provide clear opportunities for all three genres 8
- Provide some opportunity but only in two genres 9
- Provide opportunity in only one genre 6



What writing genre is dominant?

- Academic 24
- Workplace 0
- Community 0



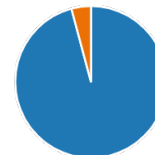
3 Does the syllabus reflect the intention of the Core Perspective definition?

- Yes 24
- Somewhat 0
- No 0



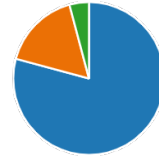
4 Does the student have the opportunity to synthesize and summarize information into a coherent text?

- Frequently, across the syllabus 23
- In at least one assignment 1
- In some readings and activities 0
- No 0



5 Do students have the opportunity to read a variety of genres, including peer-reviewed research?

- Frequently, across the syllabus 19
- In at least one major assignment 4
- In some readings or activities 1
- No 0

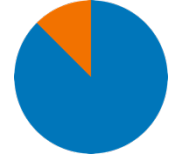


APPENDIX B

W Core Assessment – Core Quality – Results Spring 2023

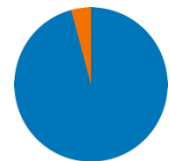
Content Development - Create meaning and express ideas

- Offers the opportunity for students to create compelling content and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter, conveying a sense of understanding of that content throughout the work
- Offers students some opportunity to develop content and explore ideas
- Offers minimal opportunity for students to develop content and express their ideas
- Content development is not assessable in this artifact



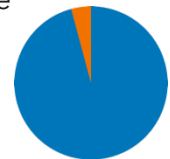
Considers intended audience and context

- Offers students the opportunity to consider context, audience, and purpose
- Offers students some opportunity to consider context, audience or purpose, but not all three
- Offers little to no opportunity to consider context, audience, purpose
- Context, audience and purpose were not relevant for this artifact



Engaging and utilizing feedback to improve communication

- Offers students the opportunity to consider, utilize, and where appropriate integrate feedback to improve communication
- Offers students some opportunity to acknowledge or respond to feedback in some manner to improve communication, but not both
- Offers students little opportunity to respond to feedback
- Assignments did not require response to feedback



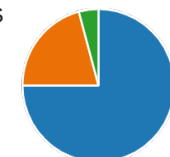
Genre and Conventions-Exposure

- Offers students exposure to a wide range of genres and conventions
- Offers students some variety of exposure to genres and conventions
- Offer students only minimal exposure to a variety of genres and conventions
- Genre and convention variety are assessable on this document



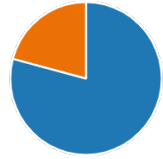
Genre and Conventions-Creation

- Offers students an opportunity to create in a wide range of genres and conventions
- Offers students some opportunity to creates in different genres and conventions
- Offer students only minimal opportunity to create different genres and conventions
- Offers only one writing genre



Sources and Evidence

- Offers students exposure to read and work with high-quality, credible, relevant sources (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities, etc.) to develop ideas or visual/audio representations that are appropriate for the subject content
- Offers students some exposure to read and work with credible, relevant sources (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities, etc.) to develop ideas or visual/audio representations
- Offers students minimal exposure to read and work with evidence or sources to support ideas or visual/audio representations
- Use of sources and evidence were not required



Assignment/s encourage students to develop claims that persuade specific audiences, provide clear evidence and reasoning, and account for alternative positions.

- Assignment/s ask students to develop some claims that either persuade specific audiences, provide clear evidence and reasoning, or account for alternative positions, but not all three
- Assignment/s ask for arguments, but are not focused on persuading specific audiences
- Persuasion was not required in this assignment
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