

Strategizing How to Assess



Writing in the Disciplines

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Overview



- **What are your values for writing**
- **Review of writing program values**
- **Discussion of discipline values of writing**
- **Criteria, features, objectives**
- **Assessment tools**
- **Closing the loop**

What values do you have for writing?



- **Take a few minutes and write down the values that you hold for writing.**
 - What do you look for in an effective example of writing?
 - What engages you in writing?
 - What annoys or distracts you in writing?
 - What do you try to model in your own writing?

At your tables, briefly discuss the values that you hold for writing.

Synthesis of writing program values



- **Emphasis on the process of writing**
 - Planning, drafting, revision, editing, proofreading
- **Emphasis on reading, writing, and critical thinking connections**
 - Synthesis, analysis, evaluation
- **Does not emphasize conventions or formatting**
 - Implied in editing, coherence

Writing program values



- **TMCC**
 - Analyze and compare perspective, meaning, and style in different texts.
 - Develop a thesis-driven research project that is organized and developed using voice, tone, language and format appropriate to the audience and purpose of the writing assignment.
 - Use logical support, including informed opinion and fact, as well as their interpretations, to develop ideas, avoiding fallacies, biased language, and inappropriate tone.

Writing program values



TMCC continued

- Engage in selection and incorporation of ideas derived from a variety of sources, such as library databases and print resources, books, journals, the internet, and interviews, and proper documentation of those sources.
- Apply a variety of strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing written work, realizing the recursive nature of writing.
- Demonstrate satisfactory competence in the conventions of Standard Written English and the elements of proper presentation, including layout, formatting, and printing.

- TMCC Student Learning Outcomes (taken from the WPA Outcomes Statement, revised 4/2000)

Writing program values



- **UNR**
 - Continue and improve the writing practices learned in 101: prewriting, composing, revising, responding, editing, attending to language and style, and writing with audience and purpose in mind;
 - Engage in critical reading and interpretation of a wide range of texts;
 - Be able to summarize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply what they read—both orally and in writing;
 - Use writing as a means of understanding, organizing, and communicating what they read;
 - Frame complex research questions or problems;
 - Demonstrate awareness of their own beliefs, concepts, and biases;

Writing program values



UNR continued

- Be able to produce a **coherent**, well-supported argument that shows critical thinking and careful consideration of alternative viewpoints
- Recognize, evaluate, and use a variety of information sources: expert people, publications of information agencies, popular and specialized periodicals, professional journals, books, and electronic resources
- Conduct research that shows evidence of the ability to synthesize, use fairly, and credit the ideas of others using the **appropriate citation style**
- Write **coherently**, drawing from diverse sources, assimilating information and ideas and producing work that represents the student's position on the material.

✦ Outcomes taken from UNR Core Writing Website

Writing program values



- **WNC**
 - Read and think critically.
 - Recognize characteristics of various genres (types) of literature.
 - Understand and apply terms used to analyze literature.
 - Discuss and write about serious literature with critical insight, precision and clarity.

- Outcomes taken from WNC English Department Website

Writing program values



- **Some differences even between the three Nevada institutions highlighted:**
 - UNR & TMCC
 - ✦ Research and argument writing
 - WNC
 - ✦ Literary analysis

Discipline values of writing: Biology



- **Language should be**
 - Precise
 - Scientific
 - Concise
 - Direct
- **Proper citation**
- **Organization: general to specific**
- **Accurate content**
- **Includes expected sections (e.g. introduction, methods, discussion, etc.)**
 - ✦ **George Mason University Department of Biology: “A Guide to Writing in the Biological Sciences”**

Discipline values of writing: Mathematics, Statistics, & Computer Science



- **Clear statement of problem and goal**
 - **Proper use of definitions and theorems**
 - **Complete sentences**
 - **Formatting**
 - **Logical thought sequence**
 - **Concise and direct**
-
- Marquette University Writing Across the Curriculum “Writing in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science Courses”

Discipline values of writing: Economics



- **Clearly stated thesis**
- **Concise and coherent organization**
- **Empirical evidence**
- **Logical conclusion**
- **Demonstrate economic theory**
- **Extensive references**
- **Free of grammatical and mechanical errors**
- Marquette University Writing Across the Curriculum “Writing in Economics Courses”

Discipline values of writing: Sociology



- **Methodology**
 - **Analytical reading**
 - **Evidence of analysis of sources**
 - **Sense of own and others' perspectives**
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- **Dartmouth College “Writing the Sociology Paper”**

Discipline specific values: Art History



- **Create an argument**
 - Translate visual into verbal
- **Use discipline specific terminology**
- **Description**
- **Summarize context**
- **Topic sentences at end of paragraphs**
- **Avoid the subjective “I”**

- Dartmouth College “Writing the Art History Paper”

Discipline values of writing



- **Within disciplines, students begin to be exposed to and learn the nuances specific to writing in that discipline**
 - Style
 - Tone
 - Formatting

Examples of writing from different disciplines



- **You have four examples of writing from different disciplines.**
 - Read through at least two of the examples.
 - ✦ Which of the examples best aligns with your values for writing?
- **Example 1: Biology report**
- **Example 2: Chemistry laboratory notebook**
- **Example 3: Art History paper**
- **Example 4: First-year composition paper**

What to ask yourself?



- **What do you want to know about how students write in your program or in your class?**
 - What values and/or features are most important to you?
 - ✦ Do you want to know if they are applying certain concepts?
 - ✦ Do you want to know if specific terms/vocabulary has become a part of their usage?
 - ✦ Do you want to know more information about their grammar and mechanics?
 - Take a few minutes to write down what you want to know.

What gets left out



- **Not everything can be or should be assessed**
 - Examples: growth of the writer
 - ✦ More complex to assess
 - Do you want to spend resources on the answer?
 - Are there direct measures or only indirect measures?

Creating Student Learning Objectives



- **Use your list of questions and values**
 - Form into statements of what students will learn about writing
 - ✦ Students will. . .
 - Students will use grammar effectively.
 - Students will demonstrate scientific report formatting.

Once you've identified features. . .



- **Once you have measurable objectives, you will need to develop an assessment tool.**
 - Survey
 - Questions to include in other assessments (e.g. quizzes, tests, reflective letters, evaluations)
 - Writing assignment
 - ✦ Rubric
 - Direct measure

Examples of assessment tools



Template for Analytic Rubrics

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
Criteria #1	Description reflecting beginning level of performance	Description reflecting movement toward mastery level of performance	Description reflecting achievement of mastery level of performance	Description reflecting highest level of performance
Criteria #2	Description reflecting beginning level of performance	Description reflecting movement toward mastery level of performance	Description reflecting achievement of mastery level of performance	Description reflecting highest level of performance

Source: Mertler (2001)

Examples of assessment tools:

Academic Profile Essay Scoring Guide



- **The 4 paper:**
- **1. Demonstrates the ability to use the discourse and analysis appropriate to the academic discipline.**
- **2. Displays a clear understanding of the quotation and the task presented in the topic.**
- **3. Sustains a focused discussion.**
- **4. Uses evidence to support a point (e.g., uses consistently well-developed, well-chosen examples).**
- **5. Demonstrates an awareness of or insight into the complexities implied in the quotation.**
- **6. Avoids an awareness of or insight into the complexities implied in the quotation.**
- **7. Avoids sweeping generalizations, clichés, and unsupported assertions.**
- **8. Displays a level of writing skill that supports and enhances the discussion.**

○ The NPEC Sourcebook on Assessment, Volume 1: Definitions and Assessment Methods for Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Writing

Examples of assessment tools: Academic Profile Essay Scoring Guide



- **The 3 paper:**
 - **1. Demonstrates the ability to use the discourse and analysis appropriate to the academic discipline.**
 - **2. Displays a clear understanding of the quotation and the task presented in the topic.**
 - **3. Sustains a focused discussion.**
 - **4. Uses evidence to support a point (e.g., uses a single well-developed example or presents several pertinent, though not thoroughly developed, examples).**
 - **5. Displays a level of writing skill that does not interfere with the conveying of information.**
-
- The NPEC Sourcebook on Assessment, Volume 1: Definitions and Assessment Methods for Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Writing

Examples of assessment tools: Academic Profile Essay Scoring Guide



- **The 2 paper:**
- **1. Demonstrates an understanding of the quotation but fails to address the task in one or more of the following ways:**
 - **depends on poorly selected or inaccurate examples from coursework;**
 - **fails to develop examples adequately;**
 - **merely lists (phrases, theories, authors, concepts);**
 - **provides abstractions and generalizations related to the discipline or topic, but fails to develop, explain, or effectively incorporate them into the essay;**
- **or**
- **addresses only one part of the task.**
- **2. Provides well-developed examples but does not relate them to the topic.**

- The NPEC Sourcebook on Assessment, Volume 1: Definitions and Assessment Methods for Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Writing

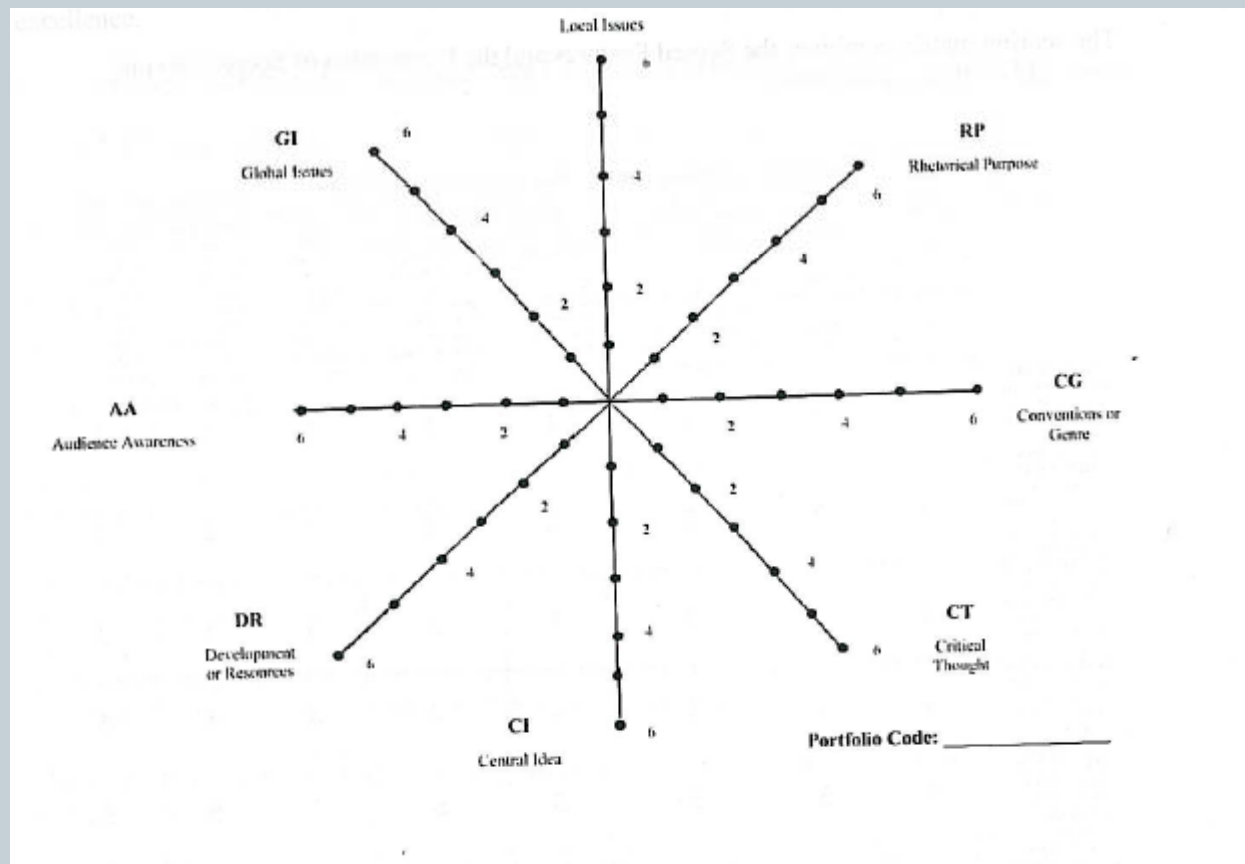
Example rubric: Art History—Discussion & Writing



Category	Description	Check & Comments		
		Good	Average	Needs work
Growth	How does student now compare with earlier lessons? Knowledge? Vocabulary? In awareness and perception?			
Creativity	Speculates about meaning and feeling of work. Takes risks. Mentions alternatives			
Fulfills assignment	How well does written and spoken work solve the problems outlined in this assignment? . . . Are variations from the assignments made for valid & creative reasons?			
Knowledge	Gaining knowledge & awareness of art terminology & art purposes & concepts. . . . Gaining knowledge and awareness of artists and their styles and work.			

Adapted from <http://www.goshen.edu/art/ed/rubric3.html> © Marvin Bartel, Instructor, Goshen College.

UNR's ENG 101 Rubric



Examples of criteria for writing assessment



- **Appropriateness**—Extent to which the student addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
- **Unity and focus**—The clarity with which the student states and maintains a main idea or point of view.
- **Development**—The amount, depth, and specification of supporting detail the student provides.
- **Organization**—The clarity of the student's writing and logical sequence of the student's ideas.

Examples of criteria for writing assessment



- **Sentence structure**—The effectiveness of the student’s sentence structure and the extent to which the student’s writing is free of errors in sentence structure.
- **Usage**—The extent to which the student’s writing is free of errors in usage and shows care and precision in word choice.
- **Mechanical conventions**—The student’s ability to spell common words and use the conventions of capitalization and punctuation.

Drawing a tool



- **Draw or sketch an assessment tool that you think would be effective to measure one feature you identified earlier.**
 - Not about artistic ability
 - Your tool can reveal more about your values

An experiment analogy



- **Assessment is like a scientist's experiment.**
 - Hypothesis
 - Test
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Action

Closing the loop



- What you *do* with the results of your assessment is the most important part.
 - From NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities
Writing assessment should:
 - ✦ Place priority on the improvement of teaching and learning.
 - ✦ Provide the foundation for data-driven, or evidence-based, decision making.
 - ✦ Positively impact pedagogy and curriculum.
 - ✦ Use multiple measures and engage multiple perspectives to make decisions that improve teaching and learning.

Sharing the benefits



- **Ask: How can the assessment results be translated into curricular changes?**
- **It is essential that you expose the benefits to**
 - Department/program
 - Other faculty
 - Administration
 - Students

Questions & Responses