

**High Point University Composition Program
2012-2013 Assessment Report**

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ABSTRACT

To improve teaching and learning of the use of sources in writing, formative Outcomes Assessment (OA) of ENG 1103 was conducted in AY 2012-2013. The process has identified criteria important to judgments of passing and failing student performance, and program improvements will be implemented to strategically address these areas for AY 2013-2014. Recommendations include: establish shared definitions for “appropriateness” between ENG 1103 instructors and Smith librarians; identify and share resources generated by the OA process on Blackboard, including: successful assignments, examples of student work, and articles on relevant pedagogies; plan fall workshops on scaffolding the teaching and learning of “integration”; invite brown bag discussions on this topic. These data-driven recommendations are designed to improve teaching and learning of the relevant outcomes.

BACKGROUND

The seven current ENG 1103 learning outcomes were distilled from a longer list and approved in April 2012. A formative assessment of the Composition Program was conducted in AY 2012-2013 to improve teaching and learning of the following new outcomes:

1. Conduct research as inquiry, in the sense of . . . *integrating* others' ideas and information with one's own.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of academic *conventions* regarding essay structure, tone, citation, and sentence clarity [as they pertain to outcome #1].

These outcomes will hereafter be referred to as **Integration** and **Conventions**.

ENG 1103 assignments have always required sources, but no assignment prioritized the learning outcome Integration in a way that could be assessed. A required "synthesis" assignment was therefore introduced in fall 2012 with the following guidelines: 1. it must be an essay of ~1200-1400 words; 2. it must integrate at least three sources. However, due to the short program history of this outcome there is no shared understanding of the assignment's purpose or methods for teaching and grading it. There was support for but not oversight of implementation. Instructors were encouraged to design and share their assignments in order to generate ideas about what we want this assignment to do, and why, in the context of ENG 1103.

Because construct validity could not be established, the purpose of OA was not to assess student performance of the outcome. Instead, the purpose was to assess how the assignment was taught and valued by instructors in order to inform effective revision of program guidelines.

PROCEDURES

Dynamic Criteria Mapping

ENG 1103 instructors engaged in a streamlined version of *dynamic criteria mapping*, an inquiry process for identifying the values actually in play when instructors teach and assess writing. From this descriptive data, programs can generate a shared working vocabulary for normative criteria that can be used for teaching and assessment. Programs can then better articulate teaching practice to assessment practice.

In December 2012, an English department work-study identified a random sample of 60 students enrolled in ENG 1103. Fifty-one assignments were collected and all identifying information removed. These assignments were then divided among four packets and reserved for OA.

In spring 2013 the Director of Composition scheduled and conducted a series of "focus group" discussions with ENG 1103 instructors. Participants were given the same two student essays and asked to identify what they valued and did not value in each student's work with sources. All

focus groups were led through the same four discussion questions and minutes were taken. From the compiled focus group minutes, a criteria map was developed and presented to instructors at the April 5 Composition meeting. This criteria map informed the glossary that was completed and approved by the eight-member OA committee on April 29. This glossary became the central assessment instrument. (See appendix).

Assessment procedure

For the April 29 OA, each of the four packets was assigned two readers on the OA committee. After a one-hour normative discussion of sample essays, readers were asked to assess each assignment in their packet using a 1-6 scale, where 1-3 signified degrees of failing to meet expectations for the outcome and 4-6 signified degrees of meeting or exceeding expectations for the outcome. This scale is in accordance with our program commitment to teaching expectations for academic writing, and the language is consistent with classroom practice.

The OA instructions:

1. Assign a Conventions score of 1-6.
2. Assign an Integration score of 1-6.
3. Note the criterion from the glossary that most informed your decision on the Integration score.

RESULTS

- 27/51 or 53% received a combined Integration score of 6 or lower.
- 26/51 or 51% received a combined Conventions score of 6 or lower.
- There was a highly significant correlation between combined Conventions and Integration scores of 0.7330839 ($p < 0.0001$; the correlation is significant).
- 9/51 or 18% received passing scores from both readers.

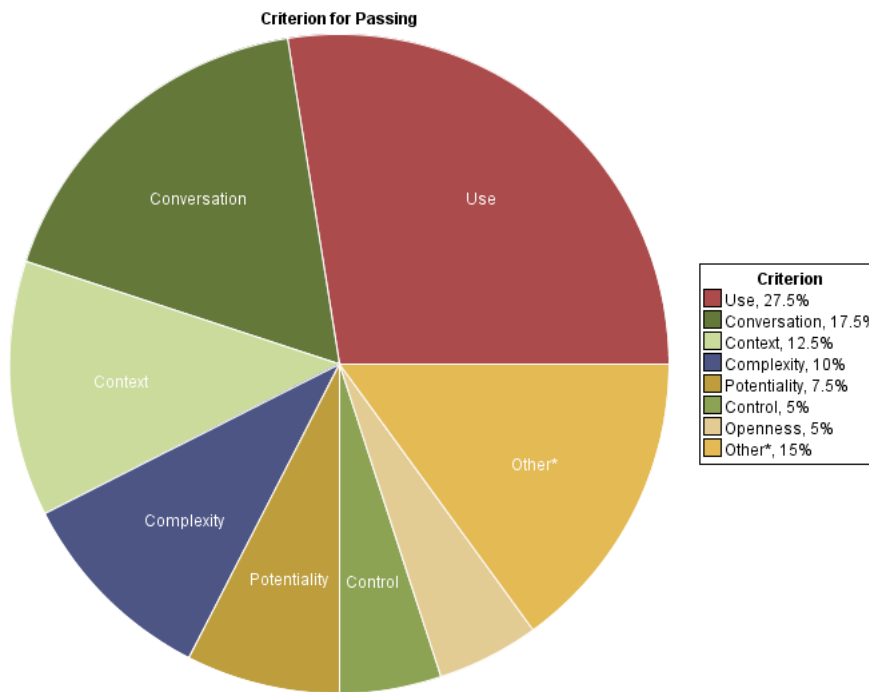
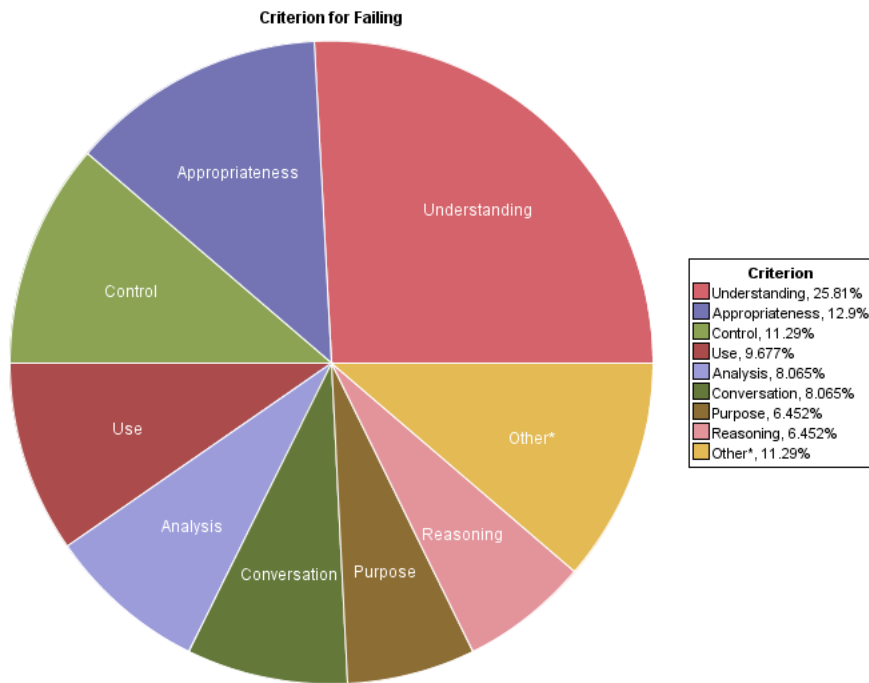
Reasons cited for judgments of failure to meet expectations:

- **Understanding** was cited 16 out of 62 times.
- **Appropriateness** was cited 8 out of 62 times.
- **Control** was cited 7 out of 62 times.
- Other cited criteria for failure: use (6), analysis (5), conversation (5), purpose (4), reasoning (4)

Reasons cited for judgments of meeting/exceeding expectations:

- **Use** was the most commonly cited reason, at 11 out of 40 times.
- Other common causes: conversation (7), context (5), complexity (4), potentiality (3), control (2), openness (2)

The criterion results are displayed in the charts below:



*For both charts, the Other category comprises criteria mentioned less than 4% of the time. (For Failing, # citations < 4; for Passing, # citations < 3).

CONCLUSIONS

- The prevalence of “understanding” among failing scores indicates that many submissions could not be evaluated because they did not demonstrate the Integration outcome. For example, the assignment may have included fewer than 3 sources or may have been recognized by the reader as a different ENG 1103 assignment.
- The prevalence of “appropriateness” as a reason for failure indicates a need for guidelines regarding the evaluation and application of sources in relation to purpose.
- The correlation between combined Conventions and Integration scores may simply indicate degrees of student preparation. However, “control,” the third most common reason for failure, is largely demonstrated through academic conventions. Therefore, while “Conventions” refers to what we tend to consider low-level concerns, explicitly teaching Conventions may help improve student performance on “control” and therefore the high-level learning outcome of Integration.
- One unexpected finding is that different working definitions of “conversation” are in play among instructors. While there is consensus on its value, some define it as a writer making sources overtly speak to one another, and some define it as a writer engaging sources in any way understood as conceptually or rhetorically relevant to the writer’s purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Draw on data to refine assignment guidelines.
- Work with librarians and instructors to create program definitions of “appropriateness” and ensure consistency across sections.
- Upload Blackboard resources for instructors, such as:
 - examples passed by both readers
 - examples demonstrating common reasons for failure
 - examples demonstrating different types of “conversation”
 - common features shared by successful assignments
 - how to sequence/scaffold the assignment
 - scholarly articles addressing these issues
- Plan workshops on designing this assignment in a sequence, on evaluating sources, on teaching Conventions, and on teaching use of scholarly sources.
- Workshop all syllabi and assignments in August to ensure consistency across sections.
- Schedule fall brown bags for sharing ideas.
- Assess outcomes again in AY 2013-2014.

All recommendations are designed to cultivate a shared understanding of program criteria for judgment and to improve teaching and learning of the outcomes.

Appendix

**Matrix of HPU Attribute and LEAP Outcome
Corresponding to Relevant ENG 1103 Outcomes**

ENG 1103 Outcomes	HPU Desired Attributes	LEAP Outcomes
<p>Conduct research as inquiry, in the sense of ... Integrating others' ideas and information with one's own.</p>	<p>1.1.c: Students will demonstrate in writing that they can: organize expository, analytical, and argumentative essays, including those developed with secondary sources.</p>	<p>INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: Written and oral communication</p>
	<p>2.1: Students will have a critical understanding of the nature of, the need for, and the sources of information. 2.2: Students will possess the technological skills necessary to locate a broad range of information resources. 2.3: Students will possess the critical skills necessary to evaluate the quality of various information resources and to choose resources appropriate to their information needs.</p>	<p>INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: Inquiry and analysis</p> <p>INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: Information literacy</p> <p>INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: Inquiry and analysis</p>
	<p>1.1.b: Students will demonstrate in writing that they can: vary style according to purpose, audience, and occasion.</p>	<p>INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS: Written and oral communication</p>

Focus Group Schedule

Focus group 1: W 3/27, 10:30

Cadeau
Kozma
Middleton
Squint
Walker

Focus group 2: W 4/3, 11:30

Carlson
Goeke
Richard
Schweitzer

Focus group 3: T 4/9, 11:00

Church
Craven
Haas
Scalf
Scheidt

Focus group 4: T 4/9, 2:00

Casey
Fiander
Paul

Focus group 5: W 4/10, 11:30

Carpenter
Linker
McSween
Sellers
Goeke

Outcomes Assessment April 29, 2013

Worksheet

Student ID:

Conventions (signal phrases/verbs, framing, citation, attribution)	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Integration of information and ideas of others	1	2	3	4	5	6
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Criterion:	_____	(from glossary)
Other:	(-) _____	(+) _____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Glossary

Accuracy: of facts; “I do not think it means what you think it means”; also *ethos*
Analysis: to designate approach; also response; reaction; reporting
Appropriateness: evaluation; reliability and credibility of sources
Audience: relevance; assumptions; ease of reading
Context: to serve purpose and audience; to create the conversation writer enters
Complexity: of organization, of task, of claims
Conversation: sources speaking to each other; writer engaging ideas of others.
Control: source-driven/purpose-driven; parroting; differentiation; randomness
Difficulty: of writing task
Ethos: of writer
Interest: passion; thinking
Openness: vs. resistance to ideas and evidence; arrives someplace new; change
Potentiality: points to future work; as work-in-progress
Purpose
Reading: depth/surface; ownership; skimming
Reasoning: analysis-in-action; claim-evidence relationship; warrants; premises
Specificity: scope of claims and generalizations; relevance of claims to problem
Understanding: of task; of reading; of assignment
Use: of sources as support or props; rhetorical function of sources; application; BEAM

Outcomes Assessment Committee

Holly Middleton
Allison Walker
Bill Carpenter
Chris McSween
Jacob Paul
Terri Scalf
Charmaine Cadeau
Joe Goeke

The committee represented the disciplinary backgrounds and ranks of the ENG 1103 teaching staff.