General Education Assessment: Written Communication Results 2019

What do we mean by Written Communication?

Virginia Western describes Critical Thinking as the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience.

A competent written communicator can develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Students with strong written communication skills can:

- o   organize content in a logical order
- o   create a well-stated thesis
- o   create well-developed paragraphs supporting the thesis
- o   create a well-developed conclusion
- o   use proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure
- o   use proper word choice

How did we assess Written Communication?

We assessed students' critical thinking abilities through assessment of selected classwork.

How was student work selected?

Fall 2018

- At the beginning of the fall 2018 semester, program heads discussed the general education competencies that would be assessed that year with the faculty in their area. For 2018-19, these competencies were Quantitative Literacy and Written Communication.
- Faculty identified what assignments in their courses might be appropriate to serve as "artifacts" for the assessment process, and submitted a list of these to the Institutional Effectiveness Office (IEO). Such assignments might include homework, lab assignments, test questions, projects, or other student work.
- The IEO reviewed the lists and worked with program heads and faculty as needed to ensure that an appropriate array of course sections was included.

Spring 2019

- By the end of the following semester (spring 2019), faculty sent the IEO the student work (artifacts) from all of the students in their class for the selected assignments.
- The faculty submissions were not graded and included the student names and student IDs for demographic analysis. All student and faculty information was redacted from the artifacts by the Institutional Effectiveness Office prior to assessment.

Fall 2020

- The Institutional Effectiveness Office selected a random sample of 150 redacted written communication artifacts to be assessed.
- Student artifacts from Spring 2019 were assessed from the following classes, which include a range of subjects, instructor types, student levels, and course modalities:

Subject	Instructor Type	Course Level	Mode of Instruction
CST	Full-time	1xx	Daytime, on campus
PHI	Full-time	1xx	Daytime, on campus
AST	Full-time	2xx	Hybrid
RAD	Full-time	1xx	Hybrid
ENG	Full-time	2xx	Online
PSY	Full-time	2xx	Daytime, on campus
ART	Full-time	1xx	Daytime, on campus
ENG	Dual	2xx	Dual enrollment in the high schools
ENG	Adjunct	1xx	Daytime, on campus
BIO	Full-time	2xx	Daytime, on campus
LGL	Full-time	2xx	Online
ECO	Adjunct	2xx	Hybrid
ROC	Full-time	1xx	Online

Who assessed the student work?

- Through the governance process, some faculty chose to serve on the General Education Workgroup for 2020-21. This workgroup was charged with:
    - o Assessing the artifacts for the selected general education competencies
    - o Analyzing prior general education assessment results and developing a plan for improving student learning for these outcomes
    - o Revising the assessment rubrics as needed
- The members of the workgroup were divided into teams, each assessing an equitable set of artifacts from Spring 2019. The team members evaluated and scored each artifact based on criteria in the appropriate rubric.
- Each team then provided the Institutional Effectiveness Office with a list of reconciled scores as well as summary information regarding the process, the rubric, student strengths and student weaknesses.
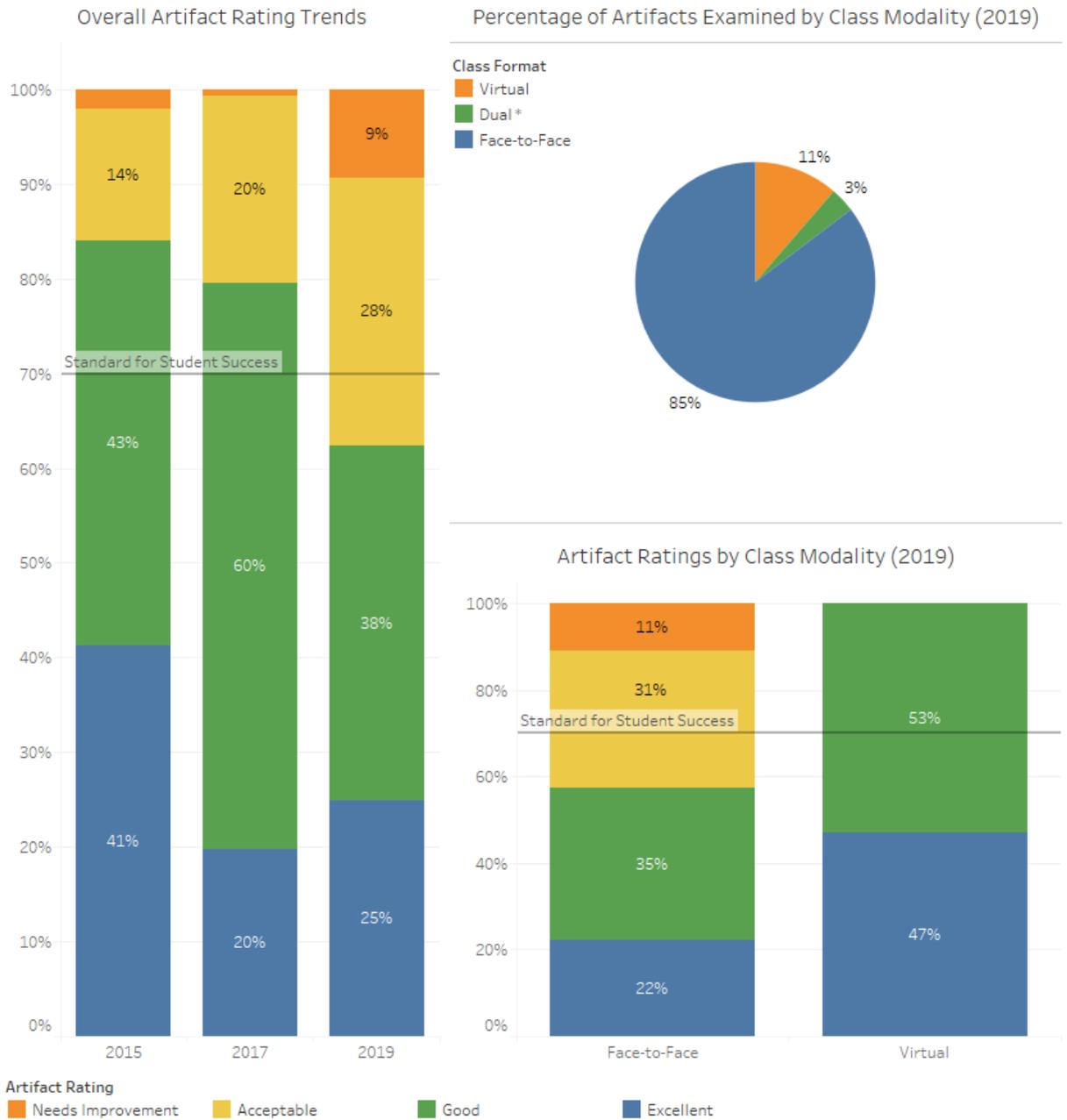
The Institutional Effectiveness Office analyzed the results, with comparison against a target for student achievement of the competency. This target was established by the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs based on prior results, and approved by Faculty Senate. The results were discussed with faculty at the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester.

Who were the standards for assessment?

What were the standards for assessment?

The rubric used in evaluating the written communication artifacts is included at the end of this report.

What were our results?

Written Communication Assessment

Overall Artifact Rating Trends

Percentage of Artifacts Examined by Class Modality (2019)

Class Format
- Virtual
- Dual *
- Face-to-Face

- 11%
- 3%
- 85%

Artifact Ratings by Class Modality (2019)

Artifact Rating
- Needs Improvement
- Acceptable
- Good
- Excellent

Categories that comprised less than 10% of examined documents are noted with an asterisk (*) and are not included in ratings breakdown.

The standard for student success is that at least 70% of examined artifacts receive a rating of "Good" or "Excellent".

The assessment teams noted the following overall student strengths:

- The majority of the artifacts submitted were well-written and showed critical thinking and analysis.
- Most content was organized and logical.
- Students appeared to put a great deal of thought and effort into most of these assignments

The teams also noted the following overall student weaknesses:

- Several of the artifacts had poor sentence structure, punctuation errors, and poorly-defined theses.
- Students did not always follow assignment directions.
- Many grammatical errors were made.
- In some cases, students used the assignment to tell personal stories when this was not warranted.

Have results changed since the last time this outcome was assessed?

Prior to 2017, all general education competencies were evaluated each year. This resulted in an overload of information that made it difficult to implement meaningful change. It also meant that Virginia Western had several assessment teams, which led to turnover and potential discrepancies in assessment over time. Starting in 2017, the college shifted to focusing on two general education competencies each year. Faculty were encouraged to remain with the assessment teams from year to year even though the competencies to be assessed were different each year. This led to reduced turnover and a deeper cohesiveness within the assessment teams. The college was also able to analyze results more fully and make deliberate change to impact student learning in specific areas.

Year	% of Artifacts assessed as Excellent or Good
2019	62%
2016	78%
2015	64%
2014	61%

Breakdown of current results

A breakdown of the Spring 2019 results by type of course showed that 100% of artifacts from online classes were assessed as Excellent or Good, compared to 57% of artifacts from in-person cases on campus. Dual enrollment courses were excluded from this analysis due to an insufficient number of artifacts from these classes.

Future analyses will also include an analysis of the achievement of various demographic groups, including a comparison of achievement by race/ethnicity, age range, and Pell grant eligibility.

What changes are we making to improve student learning for Written Communication?

In 2018, a group of English faculty and the Reference & Instruction Librarian co-authored an Open Educational Resource (OER) textbook to be used in introductory English courses. The book was adopted by the entire department in Fall 2018, and focuses heavily on critical reading, conducting academic research, using outside sources ethically, and citation practices. The faculty and librarian maintain a close partnership. Most introductory English courses include embedded research and citation modules, and the Reference & Instruction Librarian serves as a guest lecturer to aid students in using scholarly databases and ethical citation

practices. These changes have increased curricular focus on digital literacy and attribution for the ENG 111 and ENG 112 courses.

The college also offers a walk-in writing center that is free to students with no appointment required and has recently adopted Brainfuse 24/7 online tutoring support, which is also free to students. The walk-in writing center was converted to Zoom sessions from Spring 2020 through Summer 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, but will resume the option of in-person sessions in Fall 2021.

We have also moved to a multiple measures approach to placement in our English classes, which has resulted in more students being placed in ENG 111 and fewer in developmental English classes. We will continue to refine this process and provide support for those students who are in need.

Written Communication Rubric
Revised January 2019

Written Communication: A competent written communicator can develop, convey and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience.

	Excellent-4	Good-3	Acceptable-2	Needs Improvement-1
Organize content in a logical order	Student generates <u>abundant and logically sound content</u>. Organizes that content into logical order.	Student generates <u>sufficient and logically sound content</u>. Organizes that content into logical order.	Student generates a <u>moderate amount of content</u>. Organizes content with only minor logical weakness.	Student generates <u>little or logically weak content</u>. Fails to organize content into logical order.
Create a well-stated thesis	Presents an introduction featuring a well-stated thesis.	Presents an introduction featuring a thesis.	Presents an introduction without a thesis.	Does not present an introduction or a well-stated thesis.
Create well-developed paragraphs supporting thesis	Uses a series of cohesive, well-developed body paragraphs. Supports that thesis through topic sentences relevant to the thesis. <u>Supports each topic sentence thoroughly</u> with relevant information and sound logic.	Uses a series of cohesive, well-developed body paragraphs. Supports that thesis through topic sentences relevant to the thesis. <u>Supports each topic sentence with sufficient information</u> and sound logic.	Uses a series of body paragraphs. Supports that thesis through topic sentences relevant to the thesis. <u>Supports each topic sentence with relevant information</u> and reasonable logic.	Does not thoroughly and logically support the thesis through body paragraphs.
Create a well-developed conclusion	Ends with a well-developed conclusion that restates the thesis.	Ends with a conclusion that restates the thesis.	Ends with a conclusion.	Does not end with a conclusion.
Use proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.	Rare error in basic grammar and spelling. Sophisticated, varied sentence structure.	Few errors in basic grammar. Few misspelled words. Some variety of sentence structure.	Occasional errors in basic grammar. Words occasionally misspelled. Little variety in sentence structure.	Frequent errors in basic grammar. Simple words misspelled. No variety or sophistication in sentence structure.
Use proper word choice	Precise word choice. More sophisticated vocabulary.	Word choice generally correct, precise, and effective. Successful attempt at more sophisticated vocabulary	Words occasionally misused. Little attempt beyond everyday vocabulary.	Basic words often misused or confused. No attempt beyond everyday vocabulary.