Middle Tennessee State University General Education Competencies Assessment Report 2019 -2020

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2019-2020

Subject Area: Oral Communication

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

> The course of COMM 2200 (Fundamentals of Communication) was used for assessment purposes during the Spring of 2020 semester at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). This is a class which specifically focuses on public speaking. This assessment course has the prefix of "COMM" as this offering is taught by faculty members in the Department of Communication Studies. The designated number for this assessment course is "2200." This course has the title of "Fundamentals of Communication." It was during the 2019-2020 academic year that COMM 2200 was the only course that was used for the purpose of assessment. The focal point for assessment during the 2019-2020 academic year was the persuasive speeches of students who were enrolled in our assessment course of COMM 2200.

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

> The number of students who were assessed during the Spring of 2020 semester was 113 ($N = 113$). A purposive method of sampling was used in the Spring of 2020 semester. All of the student work (100%) that was purposively selected for inclusion was assessed.

> The original method of selecting student work and the original timeline for assessment were altered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A stratified sampling procedure based on the strata time of data was completed in February of 2020. There were 19 sections that were scheduled to be assessed from mid-March to the end of April as an outcome of this stratified sampling procedure. The former Chair of the Department of Communication Studies then made the unilateral decision to suspend assessment on March 12th 2020. It was on April 9th 2020 that the assessment of COMM 2200 was resurrected in a meeting with Dr. Susan Myers-Shirk, Dr. Katherine Brackett, Dr. Heather Hundley, and Dr. Andrew Dix. It was decided at the April 9th meeting that a purposive sampling method would be used since some of the sections that were previously selected for inclusion had already completed their speeches. In other words, the data for a robust amount of our speeches was no longer available for collection. The end result was that seven sections of COMM 2200 were purposively selected based on still having speeches that were immediately available for assessment. Four of these sections were originally on-ground prior to the pandemic (one of which was an honors section of COMM 2200). Three of these sections were online the whole semester. Some of the originally on-ground sections were in the morning while some of the originally on-ground sections were in the afternoon. Demographic data on the assessed students was not collected in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from the pilot assessment? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

Yes, the procedures described in items 1 and 2 represent a significant change from the pilot assessment. The changes that were made in the 2020 assessment of COMM 2200 occurred because traditional face-to-face classes migrated to a remote learning environment because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This change took place after the extended Spring Break ended on March 22nd 2020. The rationale for this change was that the live in-class assessment of COMM 2200 was no longer possible. As alluded to previously, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the sampling procedures, sample size, estimated timeframe, data collection, and data analyses that were completed in the spring/summer of 2020.

A secondary change that was less impactful (but noteworthy of mention) was that a new evaluator participated in the 2020 assessment of COMM 2200. The rationale for this change was that an evaluator who served on this project in the previous year was no longer employed at MTSU during the Spring of 2020 semester. Securing evaluators is a challenge for our department due to compensation that is not competitive, a limited interest in this nature of work, and time demands which are rather imposing. It is fortunate that we were able to have three evaluators again serve on this project in the 2019-2020 academic year.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for oral communication. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

(See Table 1 on the Following Pages)

Table 1. Oral Communication Competencies for 2020

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
Competency One: Within the opening segment of the speech the speaker meets the four criteria for an effective opening [1. the introduction gains the audience's attention; 2. the thesis / purpose statement is clear and concise, 3. the speaker addresses his/her credibility on the subject, and 4. the speaker clearly relates the topic to the members of the audience]; the opening segment is adequately developed.	Within the opening segment the speaker fails to meet all four criteria and/or the opening segment is missing.	Within the opening segment the speaker only meets two of the four criteria and/or the opening segment is severely under developed.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets three of the four criteria; and the opening segment lacks some development.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening section may contain minor flaws in development.	Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening segment is fully developed.
Competency One (2019) $M = 4.10$, SD = 0.90 ($N = 281$)	2 (0.7%)	14 (5.0%)	48 (17.1%)	107 (38.1%)	110 (39.1%)
(2020) $M = 3.90$, SD = 1.27 ($N = 113$)	3 (2.7%)	21 (18.6%)	16 (14.1%)	17 (15.0%)	56 (49.6%)
Competency Two: The speaker uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation, which may include one of the four patterns addressed in the Lucas text: problem-solution, problem-cause-solution, comparative advantages, or Monroe's Motivated Sequence.	The speech is clearly not persuasive and/or fails to effectively use a persuasive organizational pattern that is appropriate for the topic, and audience.	The speech is somewhat persuasive and/or the organizational pattern and expression of arguments are severely deficient [the organizational pattern is unclear and/or incomplete].	The speech is persuasive; the speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern with some errors or omissions, and some arguments may be deficient	The speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern. The organizational pattern is complete, and the speaker leaves the audience with a clear persuasive message or call to action.	The speech is clearly persuasive and the speaker presents an exceptionally clear and compelling argument or case. The organizational pattern is complete and the speaker leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action.
Competency Two (2019) $M = 4.25$, SD = 0.84 ($N = 276$)	0 (0.0%)	13 (4.7%)	31 (11.2%)	106 (38.4%)	126 (45.7%)
(2020) $M = 4.03$, SD = 1.28 ($N = 113$)	6 (5.3%)	13 (11.5%)	15 (13.3%)	17 (15.0%)	62 (54.9%)
Competency Three: The speaker provides supporting material (*examples, statistics* and *testimony*) appropriate for a persuasive presentation; the quality and variety of support clearly enhances the credibility of the speech.	The speaker uses no supporting material.	The speaker's use of support material is lacking in variety, and/or is lacking in quality.	The speaker's use of support material is adequate but is somewhat deficient; may be lacking in quality or variety.	The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality and variety.	The speaker's use of support material is exceptional; utilizes all three kinds of support material. The quality and variety of support clearly enhances credibility of the speech.

Competency Three (2019) $M = 4.26$, SD = 0.94 ($N = 282$)	6 (2.1%)	13 (4.6%)	22 (7.8%)	103 (36.5%)	138 (48.9%)
(2020) $M = 4.08$, SD = 1.16 ($N = 113$)	3 (2.7%)	12 (10.6%)	17 (15.0%)	22 (19.5%)	59 (52.2%)
Competency Four: The speaker uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion. Additionally, the vocalics are suitable to the audience and occasion. Voice is conversational, is loud enough to be easily heard, and is energetic to maintain audience interest.	The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and for the audience; the language is sexist, racist, non-inclusive, etc. Grammar and pronunciation are incorrect and/or distracting. The speaker fails to meet all vocalics factors.	The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and/or distracts from the presentation. The language attempts to be persuasive but sounds more informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are not effective. The speaker fails to meet two of the three vocalics factors.	The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear and appropriate for a formal occasion. The speaker uses an occasional slang expression or jargon, but such language is not distracting. The language is persuasive to an extent but borders on informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are effective. The speaker meets all but one of the vocalics factors.	The speaker uses language that is clear, vivid, and appropriate. The presentation is devoid of inappropriate slang or jargon. Language is persuasive throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points. The speaker meets all three vocalics factors.	The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, and appropriate. Language is persuasive throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points. The speaker uses rhythmic devices such as parallelism and/or repetition etc., to create an especially compelling and clear message. The speaker makes exceptional use of all vocalics factors.
Competency Four (2019) $M = 4.13$, SD = 0.86 ($N = 282$)	0 (0.0%)	9 (3.2%)	61 (21.6%)	97 (34.4%)	115 (40.8%)
(2020) $M = 4.33$, SD = 0.96 ($N = 113$)	0 (0.0%)	9 (8.0%)	12 (10.6%)	25 (22.1%)	67 (59.3%)
Competency Five: The speaker demonstrates the ability to effectively utilize and document a variety of multiple, credible sources.	The speaker fails to include any source documentation in the presentation.	The speaker incorporates a few sources in the presentation, but the documentation is deficient [three or fewer sources cited]. Some sources do not appear credible and/or a variety of sources are not used.	The speaker incorporates a minimum of four sources in the presentation and the sources appear to be credible, but the documentation is deficient. Source credibility is not always established and/or a variety of sources are not used.	The speaker incorporates a minimum of five sources in the presentation; the sources appear to be credible, a variety of sources are utilized, and the source documentation is not deficient.	The speaker incorporates six or more sources in the presentation; the sources are clearly credible, a variety of sources are utilized, and the source documentation is not deficient.
Competency Five (2019) $M = 4.02$, SD = 1.15 ($N = 282$)	13 (4.6%)	25 (8.9%)	21 (7.4%)	102 (36.2%)	120 (42.6%)
(2020) $M = 3.84$, SD = 1.44 ($N = 113$)	10 (8.8%)	17 (15.0%)	16 (14.2%)	8 (7.1%)	62 (54.9%)

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)
Competency Six: Within the closing segment of the speech, the speaker meets the three criteria for an effective ending [1. the speaker signals the end of the speech; 2. the thesis / purpose statement is clearly restated, 3. The speaker ends with a memorable message]; the closing segment is adequately developed.	Within the closing segment the speaker fails to meet all three criteria and/or the closing segment is missing.	Within the closing segment the speaker only meets one of the three criteria and/or the closing segment is severely under developed.	Within the closing segment the speaker meets two of the three criteria; and the closing segment lacks some development.	Within the closing segment the speaker meets all three criteria; the closing section may contain minor flaws in development.	Within the closing segment the speaker meets all three criteria; the opening segment is exceptionally developed.
Competency Six (2019) *M* = 3.96, SD = 1.15 (*N* = 282)	20 (7.1%)	9 (3.2%)	45 (16.0%)	96 (34.0%)	112 (39.7%)
(2020) *M* = 3.96, SD = 1.28 (*N* = 113)	8 (7.1%)	7 (6.2%)	26 (23.0%)	13 (11.5%)	59 (52.2%)
Competency Seven: The speaker maintains appropriate eye contact with the entire audience throughout the presentation.	The speaker fails to establish any eye contact with the audience; reads the presentation.	The speaker establishes minimal eye contact with the audience; eye contact is limited to one focal point.	The speaker establishes some eye contact with the audience; eye contact is limited to one or two focal points.	The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience; focal points are varied.	The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience, the focal points are varied and the speaker is intentional in establishing eye contact with the entire audience.
Competency Seven (2019) *M* = 3.80, SD = 1.16 (*N* = 282)	13 (4.6%)	28 (9.9%)	60 (21.3%)	83 (29.4%)	98 (34.8%)
(2020) *M* = 4.25, SD = 1.07 (*N* = 113)	5 (4.4%)	1 (0.9%)	21 (18.6%)	20 (17.7%)	66 (58.4%)
Competency Eight: The speaker uses physical behaviors (body movement, gestures and posture) that support the verbal message and enhance the speaker's appearance of confidence and competence.	The speaker uses almost no gestures and/or body movement during the presentation to support the verbal message. The speaker's posture significantly detracts from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.	The speaker uses very limited gestures and/or body movement during the presentation and/or the gestures do not support the verbal message. The speaker's posture detracts somewhat from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.	The speaker utilizes some body movement gestures to support the verbal message. The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a somewhat confident and competent speaker.	The speaker uses both body movement and gestures during the presentation to enhance the verbal message. The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker.	The speaker uses both body movement and gestures during the presentation. The movement and gesture add significantly to the clarity and impact of the message and enhances the verbal message. The speaker uses posture that supports the verbal message and the speaker appears to be a strong, confident and competent speaker.

Competency Eight					
(2019) $M = 4.14$, SD = 1.01 (N = 281)	3 (1.1%)	14 (5.0%)	67 (23.8%)	55 (19.5%)	142 (50.5%)
(2020) $M = 4.39$, SD = 0.90 (N = 113)	1 (0.9%)	3 (2.7%)	17 (15.0%)	22 (19.5%)	70 (61.9%)

*For the purpose of comparison, data from 2019 are presented in blue. Data from 2020 are presented in red.

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

The 2020 assessment data which were reported in the fourth item produced interpretations and conclusions that pertain to the student attainment of learning outcomes. A breakdown of each of the outcomes and some conclusions are noted in the sections which follow.

- **Outcome I**: The opening segment of a speech was the focal point for the first outcome. Results indicated that 78.7% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the first outcome. More specifically, the findings revealed that 14.1% of students ($N = 16$) were evaluated as fair, 15.0% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as good, and 49.6% of students ($N = 56$) were evaluated as excellent. It was at the other end of the spectrum that 21.3% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. An inadequate assessment was applied by evaluators to 18.6% of the student ($N = 21$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was applied by evaluators to 2.7% of the student ($N = 3$) speeches.

  o The results from Outcome I are good. A non-statistically significant downward trend was observed on Outcome I in 2019 relative to the data that emerged on Outcome I in 2020 ($t (391) = 1.727, p = .085$). However, the results from 2020 on this outcome are not worrisome. That is, the 2020 data suggests our students are performing at a level that is nearing the good category and firmly above the fair category as it relates to the introductory component of her/his persuasive speech.

- **Outcome II:** The second outcome concentrated on using an organizational pattern that was persuasive in nature. Results indicated that 83.2% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the second outcome. Categorically speaking, the findings from this analysis illustrated that 13.3% of students ($N = 15$) were evaluated as fair, while 15.0% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as good, and 54.9% of students ($N = 62$) were evaluated as excellent. In contrast, a total of 16.8% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. The breakdown reveals that evaluators assigned the label of inadequate for Outcome II to 11.5.% of the student ($N = 13$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was assigned by evaluators to 5.3% of the student ($N = 6$) speeches.

  o The findings on Outcome II are also good from a categorical standpoint. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a downward statistical trend that was statistically significant was observed on Outcome II in the 2019 assessment relative to the results for Outcome II in the 2020 assessment ($t (386) = 2.033, p = .043$). Comparatively speaking, the observed results on the second outcome are slightly troublesome.

- **Outcome III:** The third outcome of this analysis centered on the use of appropriate supporting materials. The findings for the third outcome indicated that 86.7% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. A further breakdown revealed that 15.0% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as fair, while 19.5% of the students ($N = 22$) were evaluated as good, and 52.2% of students ($N = 59$) were evaluated as excellent. Additional data for the third outcome found that 10.6% of students ($N = 12$) were evaluated as inadequate. A total of 2.7% of students ($N = 3$) were evaluated as severely deficient.

  - The findings from the third outcome are good, but these findings should be appropriately tempered. Stated differently, the findings for the third outcome for 2020 when compared to the third outcome for 2019 were not statistically significant ($t\,(392) = 1.568$, $p = .118$). Indeed, results for the third outcome revealed that students in COMM 2200 are still doing a good job of incorporating supporting materials that are appropriate (e.g., statistics, examples, etc.) into her/his speech.

- **Outcome IV:** The fourth outcome for the 2020 assessment of COMM 2200 concentrated on language features such as whether appropriate grammar, diction, and syntax were used in the speech. The emergent data on the fourth outcome indicated that 92.0% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. The specifics for the fourth outcome illustrated that 10.6% of students ($N = 12$) were evaluated as fair, while 22.1% of the students ($N = 25$) were evaluated as good, and 59.3% of students ($N = 67$) were evaluated as excellent. The findings also revealed that 8.0% of students were evaluated as inadequate or lower. Specifically, 8.0% of students ($N = 9$) were evaluated as inadequate and 0.0% of students ($N = 0$) were evaluated as severely deficient.

  - The results from Outcome IV are moderately above a level that is categorically good. An upward trend that was statistically significant was observed when the 2019 data were compared against the 2020 data for the fourth outcome ($t\,(392) = 2.019$, $p = .044$). Stated differently, the data which was uncovered on this outcome show that variables related to language and voice criteria are moving in a positive direction.

- **Outcome V:** The fifth outcome for our oral communication assessment focused on gathering and using multiple sources. Results indicated that 76.2% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. A further rundown for the fifth outcome revealed that 14.2% of students ($N = 16$) were evaluated as fair, while 7.1% of students ($N = 8$) were evaluated as good, and 54.9% of students ($N = 62$) were evaluated as excellent. At the same time, the evaluators found that 23.8% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 15.0% of students ($N = 17$) as inadequate and evaluated 8.8% of students ($N = 10$) as severely deficient.

  - The findings on Outcome V could have been better. It was in the present analysis that comparing the observed data on the fifth outcome in 2019 against the observed data on the fifth outcome in 2020 did not reveal a statistical difference between these two years ($t\,(392) = 1.305$, $p = .193$). Nevertheless, a mean score of 3.84 on a 5-point Likert scale for the 2020 assessment of this outcome is an area that we should focus on improving in the future.

- **Outcome VI:** The sixth outcome for the oral communication assessment focused on the closing segment of a speech. Results indicated that 86.7% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher in 2020. A further rundown for the sixth outcome revealed that 23.0% of students ($N = 26$) were evaluated as fair, while 11.5% of students ($N = 13$) were evaluated as good, and 52.2% of students ($N = 59$) were evaluated as excellent. That noted, the evaluators found that 13.3% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 6.2% of speeches ($N = 7$) as inadequate and evaluated 7.1% of speeches ($N = 8$) as severely deficient.

    o The findings on Outcome VI are pretty good, but do not reveal a positive or negative trend in the data. The process of comparing the observed data on the fifth outcome in 2019 against the observed data on the fifth outcome in 2020 did not yield a statistical difference between these two years ($t(392) = 0.40$, $p = .968$). As a matter of consistency, the mean score on a 5-point Likert scale was 3.96 in 2019 and 3.96 in 2020.

- **Outcome VII:** The seventh outcome for the oral communication assessment concentrated on appropriate eye contact. Results indicated that 94.7% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. More specifically, the findings for the seventh outcome indicated that 18.6% of students ($N = 21$) were evaluated as fair, while 17.7% of students ($N = 20$) were evaluated as good, and 58.4% of students ($N = 66$) were evaluated as excellent. In contrast, the 2020 evaluators found that 5.3% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 0.9% of students ($N = 1$) as inadequate and evaluated 4.4% of students ($N = 5$) as severely deficient.

    o The findings on this outcome are higher than anticipated. A statistically significant increase was observed when the 2020 data on this outcome was compared against the 2019 data on this outcome ($t(392) = 3.567$, $p < .001$). Indeed, it is encouraging from a numerical standpoint to see an observed increase on the eye contact outcome but the observed increase may be an outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Outcome VIII:** The eighth outcome for the oral communication assessment concentrated on nonverbal communication during a persuasive speech. Results indicated that 96.4% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. Findings for the eighth outcome revealed that 15.0% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as fair, while 19.5% of students ($N = 22$) were evaluated as good, and 61.9% of students ($N = 70$) were evaluated as excellent. At the same time, the evaluators found that 3.6% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 2.7% of students ($N = 3$) as inadequate and evaluated 0.9% of students ($N = 1$) as severely deficient.

    o The findings on Outcome VIII were very high in terms of the observed mean score. A statistically significant increase was uncovered when the 2020 data on Outcome VIII was compared against the 2019 data on Outcome VIII ($t(391) = 2.324$, $p = .021$). All things considered, the results from the eighth outcome were very good and show evidence of student competence in terms of effective nonverbal communication.

Overall Interpretation and Analysis

The analyses that were undertaken for the 2020 oral communication competency assessment report revealed that students in COMM 2200 are performing well on the eight outcomes which are being formally tracked. A statistically significant decrease was observed on outcome two which looked at whether the speaker used an organizational pattern that was appropriate for persuasive speaking. A statistically significant increase was observed on outcome four which centered on language features. An increase that was statistically significant was also observed on outcome seven which centered on eye contact behavior and a statistically significant increase was observed on outcome eight which concentrated on nonverbal messages. The paragraphs which follow unpack the statistically significant results as well as some overall interpretations.

There are five overall interpretations of the 2020 data for the course of COMM 2200 that should be noted. First, students in COMM 2200 were rated as a 4.03 on a 5-point Likert scale for the second outcome which centered on whether the speaker used an organizational pattern that was appropriate for persuasive speaking. As alluded to previously, a mean score of 4.03 on a 5-point Likert scale can be categorically defined as good. However, the 2019 assessment data for this outcome was at a mean score of 4.25 on a 5-point Likert scale. The *t*-test analysis showed this decrease was statistically significant. One interpretation for this observed decrease was that moving the classes online adversely impacted this data point. Most (if not all) of the instructors of COMM 2200 have their students give their required informative speech before giving their required persuasive speech. The organizational pattern for organizing main points for an informative speech contrasts with the organizational pattern for persuasive speaking. It is likely that most of the students who were evaluated in this assessment were taught how to organize their informative speeches in the traditional classroom setting (as well as gave their informative speeches in the traditional classroom setting). Then, the COVID-19 pandemic forced classes to be migrated to an online setting. There were likely some students who latched on to the informative speech information that they were taught prior to the pandemic and just used the same pattern for organizing their persuasive speeches. While our instructors virtually taught students persuasive speaking after spring break, there were probably a good amount of students whose focus and priorities did not shift to learning new information in a virtual capacity amidst the global pandemic. In sum, the statistically significant decrease that was observed on this outcome was likely a function of students applying the informative speech information they were taught in the classroom, not closely focusing on the online instructor information on persuasive speaking because their focus was elsewhere during the pandemic, and then subsequently delivering their persuasive speeches with the information they were taught on how to effectively speak in an informative capacity.

Second, a statistically significant increase was observed on the fourth outcome which looked at language features. It should however be noted the effect size for this finding was minimal. The results associated with Outcome IV are difficult to interpret. One possible reason for the increase is that more of an emphasis was placed on the vocal component of the language outcome when evaluators were completing their work. As noted in the rubric for the fourth outcome, the broad description notes that "voice is conversational, is loud enough to be easily heard." Adjusting the volume on the submitted speech videos would have made the vocal component of persuasive speeches

easily heard by the evaluators (versus the 2019 on-ground component where voices were evaluated/listened to during an actual speech live in a classroom setting). This was possibly a factor that contributed to the statistical increase on this outcome. Another possible factor that could have led to the statistical increase is that a new evaluator worked on this project in 2020 relative to previous years. It is possible that this new evaluator may have assessed speeches in a less rigorous manner. A third possibility is that the statistical increase is reflective of an actual upward trend in the data. Students might be getting better on this outcome. It is also possible that an upward spike occurred because 19 out of the 113 speeches (16.8%) that were observed came from an honors section of COMM 2200. Students in honors sections have historically performed better on our eight measured outcomes relative to non-honors sections of COMM 2200. A combination of two or more of these factors may have induced the upward spike on this outcome. Either way, the results from 2020 on this outcome were strong albeit difficult to interpret.

Third, a statistically significant increase was uncovered on outcome seven which looked at the eye contact behaviors of the speakers. This increase appears to be positive on the surface, but this finding should be appropriately tempered. The statistically significant increase that was observed on this outcome was likely a function of the speech delivery medium (and the evaluation medium) being entirely remote in April of 2020 when the evaluations were completed. Students who deliver their speeches outside of the classroom can use (or perhaps manipulate) resources in their own personal environment to perceptually enhance their eye contact. For example, a student giving a speech remotely from her/his residence can place cue cards, a separate computer, etc. immediately above the camera and read off her/his notes in a manner that is difficult to detect. At a distance, it would appear the person is looking directly ahead at the camera and not at her/his notes (while in a traditional classroom her/his notes are often in her/his hands or sitting on the classroom podium). Moreover, students could use multiple takes before submitting her/his speech to the online dropbox in D2L for her/his class as result of the COVID-19 pandemic forcing all sections of COMM 2200 to be completed in a remote format. A regression to the mean will likely occur in future assessments of COMM 2200 when/if most of our public speaking classes return to a traditional face-to-face learning environment. In short, it is probably easy for students to advantageously use home resources (that are not available in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting) to positively benefit their score on this eye contact outcome.

Fourth, a statistically significant increase was documented on outcome eight which centered on physical behaviors that support the verbal message of the speaker. The observed increase in 2020 relative to 2019 was also likely a function of the COVID-19 pandemic. As suggested previously, students who record their speeches and submit them to the dropbox have the benefit of doing multiple takes while students who gave their persuasive speeches live in class in 2019 did not have the option to complete her/his speeches multiple times. Furthermore, it could also be argued that nonverbal behaviors during a speech are more salient when they are evaluated in a submitted D2L video relative to previous years when the speeches were evaluated in person during a live assessment. Evaluators may have also given the benefit of the doubt to student speeches in terms of posture (which is an integral component of the rubric) when completing their evaluations. Good posture which serves to support the appearance of being a good speaker is probably more difficult to evaluate in a submitted speech video than in a live-

in person speech. If the posture could not easily be assessed due to camera angles or other factors, the evaluators likely gave the students the benefit of the doubt in terms of assuming that the speaker had good posture during the speech. Our evaluators are trained to give speakers the benefit of the doubt in circumstances where an assessment item seems to lean in a positive direction but cannot be concretely assessed.

Fifth, a final interpretation that should be interpreted or perhaps reiterated are the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As previously stated, this influenced the sampling procedures, sample size, estimated timeframe, data collection, and data analyses that were completed in the Spring of 2020 semester. These statements are facts. It is also likely (albeit an opinion) that the pandemic influenced the uncovered results. A larger sample size would have likely stabilized the data on the four outcomes where a statistically significant increase or a statistically significant decrease were observed. A regression to the mean of the previous year would have likely been observed if the number of evaluated speeches were closer to the number of 282 speeches which were evaluated in 2019. The effects of students having multiple takes to submit their best work also likely contributed to the statistically significant increases that were observed on three of the eight outcomes. There is probably a big difference between having one chance to give your speech effectively in a live classroom setting relative to getting almost unlimited opportunities to record and re-record one's speech at home before submitting it to D2L.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

The best answer to the question of whether strategies will be implemented to correct deficiencies in the data is yes. The data point which was the most deficient in terms of comparisons to the year prior was observed on the second outcome which looked at whether a persuasive organizational pattern was used. This will be addressed at a COMM 2200 meeting at the beginning of 2021. Historically, drawing attention to areas of improvement for our lagging outcome(s) at the COMM 2200 assessment meeting (which traditionally occurs in January of each year) has benefitted our data in the subsequent assessment. That noted, the deficiency on this outcome is not very concerning for two reasons. First, most of our students not getting formally taught on persuasive speech technique in the classroom (but instead only being taught informative speech technique in the classroom) during the COVID-19 pandemic likely led to the statistically significant decrease relative to the previous year. A second reason why this decrease is not too concerning at this juncture in time is because the overall mean score was a 4.03 on a 5-point Likert scale. Categorically speaking, a mean score of 4.03 out of a possible 5.00 is classified as "good" per the rubric that was utilized in this assessment.

The data point which is the most deficient in terms of being an area of concern is the mean score of 3.84 that was observed on outcome five. This was the lowest mean score that was observed on the eight outcomes that were assessed by our evaluators. Furthermore, our COMM 2200 students have historically struggled on the fifth outcome over the past nine academic years. As noted, outcome five looks at the quantity of credible sources that were incorporated into the presentation. Our instructors have been instructed in meetings to tell their students that it is necessary to incorporate at least six outside pieces of supporting materials into one's persuasive speech. (This is also noted in

our minimum requirements document for COMM 2200 persuasive speeches that is distributed to our faculty members). It would be reckless to assume that the COVID-19 pandemic was the sole contributor for the lowest mean score being observed on this particular outcome (although it was likely a factor). This outcome was not a strong point of emphasis for our COMM 2200 instructors in 2020 relative to 2019. It is possible that we let off the gas pedal a bit too much on this outcome. Instead, emphasis was placed on our newest outcomes (e.g., outcomes six, seven, and eight) which were just added to our assessment rubric in the 2018-2019 academic year. More attention was devoted to these newer outcomes over the past two years while lesser attention was devoted to outcome five.

The strategies that will be implemented to correct the two aforementioned deficiencies are two-fold. First, our COMM 2200 instructors will be informed to place more pedagogical attention on utilizing one of the four persuasive speech patterns that are discussed in our course textbook and to reiterate to students the importance of having six or more sources in their speech. Statistical evidence from previous years suggests that merely identifying point of emphasis to our instructors of COMM 2200 at meetings often leads to an increase in assessment results. A second strategy for correcting our deficiencies is to be more proactive and less reactive to the COVID-19 pandemic. As hinted at previously, the unilateral decision of the former chair of the Department of Communication Studies to suspend assessment at a critical juncture in time and petition to not complete assessment did not serve to benefit various elements of the assessment process. That is not to say these initial decisions of the former chair of the Department of Communication Studies were not warranted or commensurate with some of the other decision-making processes that were transpiring in academia when the COVID-19 pandemic began to spike in mid-March of 2020. Nevertheless, the suspension of the assessment of COMM 2200 by the former chair made it difficult to logistically resurrect this project in the second week of April. Having a plan in place which addresses how the COVID-19 pandemic might influence assessment in the Spring of 2021 should benefit our forthcoming assessment efforts. In short, better and more collaboratively planning as it pertains to the pandemic coupled with emphasizing the importance of having six or more credible sources in a persuasive speech will help correct the aforementioned deficiencies.

Lastly, the perennial strategy that could help correct deficiencies and improve positive outcomes would be to establish a communication tutoring center (aka a speaking center) on campus. The importance of establishing a communication tutoring center has been documented in previous oral communication competency assessment reports and should continue to be noted. An established speaking center is unlikely to transpire due to unforeseen and recurring budgetary constraints and social distancing measures could impact what the traditional model of tutoring looks like. That noted, the benefits of an on-ground speaking center in terms of oral communication competence have been documented in academic scholarship (see Yook & Atkins-Sayre, 2012). In short, the data suggest students who get tutoring at a communication tutoring center give better speeches than those who do not get tutoring at a communication tutoring center (see Yook & Atkins-Sayre, 2012).

7. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?

> Yes, plans were implemented to correct deficiencies based upon the data of our previous assessment. There were two notable deficiencies that were documented in the 2019 general education oral communication competency assessment report. The first deficiency that was addressed was having a different individual serve in the role of evaluator three. It was in the 2019 oral communication competency assessment of COMM 2200 that some of the scores were upwardly spiked by one evaluator at a level that was a bit high. This deficiency was addressed by having a new person serve in the role of evaluator three.

> The second deficiency that was corrected based on previous assessments centers on the rubric criterion of eye contact. Findings from the 2019 assessment data revealed that the mean score on that outcome for the 2018-2019 academic year was 3.79 whereas it was a mean score of 4.25 in the 2019-2020 academic year. Eye contact was discussed as the main area for improvement in the COMM 2200 meeting that was held in January of 2020. The instructors of COMM 2200 were told to place more pedagogical attention on teaching students the importance of good eye behavior during persuasive speeches. The notion of varying focal points with all parts of the room and pushing students to attempt to hold eye contact for intervals of 5-8 seconds were specifically mentioned. It is possible that students effectively applied this instruction on eye contact in their persuasive speeches. It is more probable that students utilized more available resources in their homes (e.g., situating their speech notes around their recording camera, etc.) which gave the appearance of holding eye contact for extended intervals of time. The latter item likely had a more profound effect in terms of the scores on this previously identified deficiency being increased in 2020. Future analyses will reveal additional insight on the eighth outcome and on the seven other outcomes which comprise the oral communication competency assessment report for the course of COMM 2200. In summary, minor deficiencies will be addressed in the upcoming academic year and the overall findings suggest our students are continuing to do well on the eight measured outcomes which are part of the oral communication competency assessment report.

References

Frey, L., Botan, C., & Kreps, G. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Yook, E, & Atkins-Sayre, W. (2012). *Communication centers and oral communication programs in higher education: Advantages, challenges, and new directions*. Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes
Subject Area: Mathematics
Academic Year: 2019-2020

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

   - MATH 1710 – College Algebra
   - MATH 1710K – College Algebra

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed.   Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

   - A total of 1187 students in fall 2019 were assessed in the academic year. Results of all students who took the departmental final examination were used in the assessment.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

   - Reports for academic years 2016-2017 did not include distance and dual enrollment sections. Academic year 2017-2019 shows results for both distance and dual enrollment as well as results that include distance and dual enrollment sections. The procedures used are the same as used in the 2016 – 2017 reports. Each of the five learning outcomes for mathematics is associated with a specific set of questions on the final examination—40 questions for learning outcome 1; 16 questions for each of learning outcomes 2, 3, and 4; and 12 questions for learning outcome 5.

The same set of questions was used to assess both Learning Outcome 2 (real-life problems) and Learning Outcome 3 (meaningful connections), as the distinction between these two learning outcomes was too subtle to measure with a single examination.

A correct response rate of:

   - At least 85% is deemed superior,
   - Between 60% and 84%, inclusive, is deemed satisfactory, and
   - Less than 60% is deemed unsatisfactory.

Mathematics Learning Outcome to be Assessed	Test Used	Test Item Numbers
Learning Outcome 1: Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions ALL (1-40)
Learning Outcome 2: Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 2,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,19,21,22,25
Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 2,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,19,21,22,25
Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 4,6,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,19,21,25,28,36
Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 12) 7,13,15,17,20,26,32,33,34,36,37,40

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. <u>Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution.</u> The table shows Mathematics Learning Outcomes that include distance and dual enrollment sections.

Mathematics Learning Outcomes, Fall 2019 N = 1,187					
Mathematics Outcome to be Assessed		Superior	Satisfactory	Superior or Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
		# and %	# and %	# and %	# and %
1. Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.		n=271(22.8%)	n=694 (58.5%)	n=962(81.3%)	n=222 (18.7%)
2. Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.		n=284 (23.9%)	n=674 (56.8%)	n=958 (80.7%)	n=229(19.3%)
3. Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.		n=284 (23.9%)	n=674 (56.8%)	n=958 (80.7%)	n=229 (19.3%)
4. Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.		n=284 (23.9%)	n=672 (56.6%)	n=956(80.5%)	n=231 (19.5%)
5. Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.		n=284 (23.9%)	n=675 (56.8%)	n=959 (80.7%)	n=229 (19.3%)

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

Table 1 below shows results of AY 2019-2020 for percentages of unsatisfactory responses on each of the five mathematics learning outcomes compared to data from three previous academic years where distance and dual enrollment sections are included.

Mathematics Learning Outcomes	% Unsatisfactory AY 2016-2017	% Unsatisfactory AY 2017-2018	% Unsatisfactory AY 2018-2019	% Unsatisfactory AY 2019-2020
Outcome 1	26.5	19.7	22.7	18.7
Outcome 2	35.4	20.6	20.4	19.3
Outcome 3	35.4	20.6	20.4	19.3
Outcome 4	26.7	14.5	15.1	19.5
Outcome 5	17.5	10.4	12.5	19.3

Analyzing the data, we found a slight improvement in the percentage of students performing at the unsatisfactory rate for learning outcomes 1, 2 and 3 over the Academic Year 2018 – 2019. These three outcomes have in the past showed the higher unsatisfactory rates. The remaining two outcomes, 4 and 5, show an increase in the number of students performing at the unsatisfactory rate.

Some explanations are that this report is based only on data in fall 2019, not the whole academic year and the implications of including data for an increase of 1 distance and 3 dual enrollment sections. An item analysis for LO4 and LO5 will be used to further identify problems and will be used to rewrite the final exam to be used in the future.

Students are placed in K-sections (prescribed enhanced sections) based on a Math ACT score of 17 or 18, and students are placed in non-K-sections with a Math ACT score of 19 or better. This assessment combines the results of all students (both K- and non-K-sections), so that the average math ACT score of the student population in MATH 1710 is certainly less than the ACT Test Benchmark of 22 set as the benchmark for "a high probability of success" in College Algebra (http://www.act.org/research). Less than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22.

Extra support for students enrolled in K-sections includes the tenured and tenure-track faculty from University Studies who consistently teach the majority of the K-sections of MATH 1710. These students also receive extra time each week for classroom instruction, as well as the use of online programs to supplement with helping students to be more consistent in completing homework assignments. These efforts have been successful as indicated by studies consistently showing no significant difference in the final examination results when K- and non-K-sections are compared.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

Several strategies have been taken to provide a more consistent program for general education courses—

- The Committee created common departmental syllabi and common course schedules listing topics to cover for all instructors of MATH 1710 (also for MATH 1010, MATH 1530, MATH 1630, & MATH 1810).

- All faculty members are instructed to keep accurate attendance records on each student to document D-F-W grades and to encourage students to attend classes.

- Faculty members are instructed to utilize the University's Academic Alert System early and throughout the semester to notify students who are in academic jeopardy.

- Students are encouraged to use all available resources to receive tutoring and help with classwork. The syllabus includes link to Tutoring Center in James Walker Library.

- The department's MS GTAs are currently supervised by Dr. Rebecca Calahan. In supervising the teaching assistants, Dr. Calahan provides teaching mentoring, help with instructional practices, scheduling of workloads, and oversight of University and Departmental requirements in the programs of the graduate students.

- Fewer than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22, the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for a 75% chance of passing College Algebra with a *C* or better.

- In the Department of Mathematical Sciences, College Algebra is taught almost entirely by full-time temporary instructors, adjunct instructors, and GTAs.

  ❖ In F2019, 58 sections were taught (23 K-sections and 24 non K-sections). One of the 23 K-sections was distance. Two of the 24 non K-sections was distance and 8 were dual enrollment. The K-sections were taught by 10 different instructors with 3 of them tenured. The non K-sections were taught by 16 different instructors with only 1 by a tenured MTSU faculty.

- Because of an inherently higher turn-over rate for adjunct and temporary, the Department continues to request more tenure-track faculty lines to meet the needs of the student population enrolling in MATH 1710 to satisfy general education requirements.

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments? If yes, please explain.

- In order to insure greater uniformity in syllabi, grading, and learning expectations, all instructors are now required to have common information on syllabi and to use the same grading scale ranges.

- A significant and continuing goal of the Department is to develop course communities, also called professional communities, of faculty for its Gen Ed courses.

MATH 1530 and MATH 1810 are examples of courses that have formed these communities where faculty teaching the courses meet on a regular basis to share and plan for ways to improve student learning in these courses.

- The Department of Mathematical Sciences and the Department of University Studies both continue to provide free tutoring to students in all General Education Mathematics courses. In support of the University's Quest for Student Success, last spring the General Education tutoring operation for MATH 1010, 1410, 1420, 1530, 1630, and 1710 was relocated to the Walker Library, extending tutoring services into the evening and weekend hours. The Mathematics Department continues to offer tutoring in Calculus and Pre-calculus in KOM. The University Studies Department offers tutoring for MATH 1010-K, 1710-K, and 1530-K in the KOM building.

  University Studies offers a program called Academic Intervention in Mathematics (AIM) to promote success for those highly at-risk students who are repeating prescribed General Education mathematics courses. AIM targets students who have failed the course in which they are enrolled. These at-risk students are identified for each instructor at the beginning of the semester. The instructor meets with each student periodically to advise, to encourage, to teach study skills, and to individualize other interventions. Interventions may include assignments of time to be spent in the math lab, notebook checks, or written assignments. Simply meeting with students to show concern for them and to build relationships with them is a proven retention tool. Students are encouraged to meet with instructors during office hours. Instructors also use phone calls, emails, and Advisor Alerts to contact students who are not attending class. It is obvious that this type of intervention would be helpful to other students, so instructors intervene when any student is not progressing well. Any intervention that is designed for repeating students is also available to non-repeaters. For students who have missed a class or for tutors who might need to review some course topic(s), videos from the online 1710K are made available for viewing with all students and all faculty given access.

- In order to identify actions and strategies to improve student achievement, assessment results are provided and shared with faculty in Mathematical Sciences, faculty in University Studies, and members of the Mathematics General Education Committee.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes
Subject area: Writing
Academic Year: 2019-2020
Department of English

0. Overview
This report presents the results of General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment related to Writing. The assessment was conducted by the Department of English in AY 2019-2020 based on writing samples collected from a students enrolled in *ENGL 1010 Expository Writing* in fall 2019. The department's General Education Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Aleka Blackwell, coordinated the data collection, conducted the data analyses, and responded to questions 1-5 of the report. The General Education English Director, Dr. Kate Pantelides, and Associate Director, Dr. Erica Stone, reviewed the results and responded to questions 6-8 of the report.

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment.

Background
Prior to 2018, the Department of English conducted the University's annual General Education Learning Outcomes assessment for the subject area Writing by evaluating writing performance in end-of-semester essays submitted by a random sample of students enrolled in *ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing*. The assessment results informed curricular and pedagogical initiatives in the department's First-Year Writing Program, and writing performance consistently improved (see Appendix A for annual results from AY 2014-15 to AY 2017-18).

Starting in AY 2018-2019, the Department of English, in consultation with the University's General Education Committee, chose to assess student writing submitted in *ENGL 1010 Expository Writing*, the course which serves as the foundation course for ENGL 1020 *Research and Argumentative Writing*. The rationale for this shift in course choice was the department's desire to explore the possibility of additional room for improvement in writing outcomes earlier in the First-Year Writing Program.

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

 Population
 The population was the students enrolled in *ENGL 1010 Expository Writing* in the Fall 2019 semester (*N* = 2,490).

1

Sample
The sample consisted of 114 students or 4.6% of the population of students enrolled in a section of ENGL 1010 in Fall 2019. The sections sampled were taught by 57 different English faculty members.

Sampling Procedure
In Fall 2019, the English department offered 183 sections of ENGL 1010 as follows:
- 103 sections of ENGL 1010   (f2f instruction)
- 2 sections of ENGL 1010D   (online asynchronous instruction)
- 43 sections of ENGL 1010K (prescribed course with f2f instruction)
- 1 section of ENGL 1010KD   (prescribed course with online asynchronous instruction)
- 5 sections of ENGL 1010H   (honors with f2f instruction)
- 1 section of ENGL 1010L   (Raider Learning Community with f2f instruction)
- 24 sections of ENGL 1010J   (dual enrollment off campus with f2f instruction)
- 2 sections of ENGL 1010JH   (dual enrollment honors off campus with f2f instruction)

The sampling procedure was designed to address three goals:
(i)   assess writing outcomes by sampling the overall population of students enrolled in ENGL 1010,
(ii)   compare writing outcomes among different types of ENGL 1010 sections, *particularly f2f vs. online sections*, and
(iii)   aim to create cell sizes large enough to ensure an informative level of statistical power.

To accomplish these three goals with the available resources (in terms of funding for readers), the sampling procedure disproportionately favored some sections over others as shown below. For each subpopulation of students, the sample was drawn with the research randomizer at https://www.randomizer.org/.

Fall 2019 ENGL 1010	*N*	*n*	*%*
103 sections of ENGL 1010	1,451	58	4
2 sections of ENGL 1010D	31	15	48
43 sections of ENGL 1010K	453	44	10
1 section of ENGL 1010KD	14	5	36
5 sections of ENGL 1010H	85	10	12
1 section of ENGL 1010L	16	3	19
24 sections of ENGL 1010J	425	43	10
2 sections of ENGL 1010JH	15	2	13
Total	**2,490**	**180**	**7**

Of the students in the sample, the following number of students submitted the minimum number of writing assignments required to be included in the assessment (see *Writing Sampling*). The assessed sample reflected the following distribution:

Fall 2019 ENGL 1010	N	n	%
103 sections of ENGL 1010	1,451	37	2.5
2 sections of ENGL 1010D	31	15	48
43 sections of ENGL 1010K	453	20	4.5
1 section of ENGL 1010KD	14	5	36
5 sections of ENGL 1010H	85	8	9.5
1 section of ENGL 1010L	16	1	6
24 sections of ENGL 1010J	425	26	6
2 sections of ENGL 1010JH	15	2	13
Total	**2,490**	**114**	**4.6**

Writing Sampling

A minimum of three writing samples corresponding to three graded writing assignments were collected from each student in the sample. The goal was to collect as varied a sampling of each student's writing as possible in order to provide readers sufficient evidence to assess a student's performance with regard to each writing outcome.

Writing Outcomes

The areas of evaluation were those developed and assessed in AY 2018-2019, the first year during which the department assessed writing performance by sampling students enrolled in ENGL 1010. During that year, a committee of twelve English faculty, including four Graduate Teaching Assistants[1], a team of faculty with significant experience teaching ENGL 1010, convened to develop the list of writing outcomes to be assessed. The writing outcomes were developed by this committee to align with the department's First-Year Writing Program Objectives.[2] In addition to the program objectives, the committee proposed adding outcomes that evaluated writing quality at the word, sentence, paragraph, and document level, as well as a measure of overall progress in writing in the span of the semester. This process resulted in the following 11 writing outcomes:

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[1] The faculty were Pam Davis, Jennifer Kates, Alyson Lynn, Adam Mcinturff, Candie Moonshower, Elizabeth Myers, Bob Petersen, and Aaron Shapiro. The GTAs were Laney Jolley, Shelia McGhee, Savanna Teague, and Matt Zumwalt.

[2] https://www.mtsu.edu/genedenglish/docs/GEEObjectives17.pdf

1. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of purpose.
2. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of audience.
3. The student's writing reflects awareness of rhetorical choices.
4. The student's portfolio demonstrates genre awareness.
5. The student conducts and incorporates primary research.
6. The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.
7. The student's writing demonstrates control of paragraph structure.
8. The student's writing demonstrates control of document-level structure.
9. The student's writing demonstrates control of Standard American English structure and usage.
10. The student's writing reflects command of appropriate writing conventions.
11. Overall impression of student's progress in writing.

Scoring

Each student's writing received two separate scores from two different readers on each of the 11 areas of evaluation on a 5-point scoring scale, and the mean scores were used in the data analyses. The five levels on the scale were described as follows:

1 = *Undeveloped*
2 = *Developing*
3 = *Competent*
4 = *Mature*
5 = *Exemplary*

Readers were instructed to examine the submissions for evidence of performance for each outcome listed and to score it based on the highest level of achievement reflected in at least one of the writing samples.

Readers

The following English faculty and GTAs served as readers and received a $150 stipend for their service: Eric Carpenter, Pam Davis, Martha Hixon, Robert Lawrence, Alyson Lynn, Bronson Mahrt, Cindy McCain, Candie Moonshower, Elizabeth Williams, Adam McInturff, Aaron Shapiro, Savanna Teague, and Matt Zumwalt.

Grade Norming Session

To increase reliability of the assessment results, the readers participated in a grade norming session on January 3, 2020. The department's General Education Assessment Coordinator served as the facilitator. During this session, the readers evaluated and discussed portfolios of writing samples from five students whose writing had been assessed in AY 2018-2019. These portfolios were representative of different performance levels, and they served as the year-to-year calibration anchor documents. The session consisted of the following steps for each portfolio:

- *Examination* (each reader examined the prompts and writing samples)
- *Clarifying questions* (the facilitator lead a discussion of any questions raised by the portfolio under review)
- *Scoring* (readers independently and silently scored the writing samples in terms of the 11 writing outcomes)
- *Score sharing* (one at a time, each reader shared their score, and the facilitator recorded it)
- *Calibration* (the facilitator shared the scores given by the two readers who assessed the portfolio in AY 2018-2019)
- *Discussion* (the facilitator asked readers to explain and justify their scores for each outcome in turn, discuss their interpretations of the scoring rubric in relation to each outcome, and point to evidence in the students' writing samples)
- *Debriefing* (the session ended with additional discussion of any outcomes which reflected a large variance of scores)

3. **Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant changes from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.**

   In Fall 2018, we employed a proportionate sampling method. The final sample of students whose submissions met the minimum criteria and were included in the assessment reflected the following distribution across cells:

Fall 2018 ENGL 1010	N	n	%
95 sections of 1010	1,337	59	4.5
2 sections of 1010D	40	3	7.5
42 sections of 1010K	437	15	3.5
1 section of 1010KD	14	1	7
4 sections of 1010H	68	6	9
7 sections of 1010L	121	4	3
20 sections of 1010J	405	12	3
2 sections of 1010JH	27	0	0
Total	**2,422**	**100**	**4**

In Fall 2019, we made two changes to the sampling method.

First, in 2019 the sampling procedure disproportionately represented the online sections (1010D and 1010KD) to increase statistical power in comparisons of outcomes between f2f and online sections of ENGL 1010. This was necessary because these two subpopulations of students are comparatively extremely small (N=31 and N=14 respectively). We, therefore, increased the 1010D sample from n=3 in 2018 to n=15 in 2019, and the 1010KD sample from n=1 in 2018 to n=5 in 2019.

Second, the 2018 assessment reflected lower attainment of writing outcomes among students in the dual enrollment subpopulation (1010J sections). To explore this result further, we also increased the sample size of this subpopulation from n=12 in 2018 to n=26 in 2019.

As a result of these two decisions, as well as due to low submission and completion rates among students in the random sample of ENGL1010, the cell size of this subpopulation decreased from n=59 in 2018 to n=37 in 2019.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in table format.

Outcome Score	Undeveloped (1)	Developing (1.5 – 2)	Competent (2.5 – 3)	Mature (3.5 – 4)	Exemplary (4.5 – 5)
1. *A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample.*	0%	9%	31%	48%	12%
2. *The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience.*	0%	12%	46%	37%	5%
3. *The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices*	0%	14%	48%	34%	4%

appropriate to the rhetorical situation.				
4. *The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres.*	0%	18.5%	38%	33.5%	10%
5. *The score reflects a student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing.*	7%	17.5%	33%	34%	8.5%
6. *The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.*	1%	13%	37.5%	37%	11.5%
7. *The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence.*	0%	7%	52%	36%	5%
8. *The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation.*	0%	8%	43%	42%	7%
9. *The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of diction.*	0%	8%	48%	35%	9%
10. *The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization.*	0%	11%	44%	33%	12%

BETWEEN-SECTION COMPARISONS

For each of the 10 writing outcomes as well as the additional criterion which addressed overall progress in writing, we conducted t-test comparisons between the sample mean of students enrolled in regular on-campus 1010 sections and the sample means of students enrolled in 1010D, 1010H, 1010K, 1010KD, 1010L, 1010J, and 1010JH sections respectively. In light of the grade norming session aimed at year-to-year calibration of scoring, these analyses were conducted on the combined data from Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 to increase statistical power. Significance levels are marked in the tables below as follows: * = significant at the .05 level. ** = significant at the .01 level. *** = significant at the .001 level. **** = significant at the .0001 level.

The results are presented in a format that aims to align with the First-Year Program Writing Objectives.[3]

A. Complete writing tasks that require understanding of the rhetorical situation and make appropriate decisions about content, form, and presentation.

Outcomes 1-3. Evaluators scored each of these 3 items based on the writing sample within the portfolio which reflected the highest level of competence achieved by the student for the particular outcome. The scores, therefore, reflect the upper limits of performance in each of these areas for each portfolio in the sample. Evaluators could, therefore, rely on a different submission within the portfolio when scoring items 1-3.

1. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of **purpose**. (*A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample.*)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.625	2.5 – 5	69	3.34	2 – 5	37	3.5	106
ENGL 1010D	5	5 – 5	3	3.85	3 – 5	15	4**	18
ENGL 1010H	3.75	3.5 – 4	6	3.69	3 – 4.5	8	3.7	14
ENGL 1010K	3.27	2 – 4	15	3.4	2.5 – 4.5	20	3.4	35
ENGL 1010KD	3.5	NA	1	3.5	1.5 – 4	5	3.5	6
ENGL 1010L	3.375	2.5 – 4.5	4	3	NA	1	3.3	5
ENGL 1010J	3.33	2.5 – 4	12	3.1	2 - 5	26	3.2**	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.875	2.5 – 3.25	2	2.9	2
Full Sample	**3.57**	**2 – 5**	**110**	**3.38**	**1.5 – 5**	**114**	**3.47**	**224**

[3] https://www.mtsu.edu/genedenglish/docs/GEEObjectives17.pdf

2. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of **<u>audience</u>**. (*The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience.*)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.36	2 – 4.5	69	3	1.5 – 5	37	3.25	106
ENGL 1010D	5	5 – 5	3	3.6	3 – 4.5	15	3.8**	18
ENGL 1010H	3.75	3.5 – 4	6	3.44	3 – 4	8	3.6	14
ENGL 1010K	3.07	2 – 3.5	15	3	2 – 4	20	3.1	35
ENGL 1010KD	2.5	NA	1	3.3	1.5 – 4	5	3.3	6
ENGL 1010L	3.125	2.5 – 4	4	3.5	NA	1	3.1	5
ENGL 1010J	3.25	2 – 4	12	2.94	1.5 – 4	26	3	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.38	2 – 2.75	2	2.4	2
Full Sample	**3.57**	**2 – 5**	**110**	**3.38**	**1.5 – 5**	**114**	**3.23**	**224**

3. The student's writing reflects awareness of **<u>rhetorical choices</u>**. (*The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation*.)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.28	2 – 5	69	3	1.5 – 4	37	3.15	106
ENGL 1010D	4.83	4.5 – 5	3	3.52	2.5 – 4	15	3.7**	18
ENGL 1010H	3.83	3.5 – 4.5	6	3.19	2.5 – 4	8	3.5	14
ENGL 1010K	2.97	1.5 – 3.5	15	2.94	2 – 4	20	3	35
ENGL 1010KD	3	NA	1	3.3	1.5 – 4	5	3.3	6
ENGL 1010L	3.125	2 – 4	4	4	NA	1	3.25	5
ENGL 1010J	3.17	2.5 – 4	12	2.89	1.5 - 5	26	3	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.5	2 – 2.75	2	2.5	2
Full Sample	**3.29**	**1.5 – 5**	**110**	**3.06**	**1.5 – 5**	**114**	**3.14**	**224**

B. Develop genre awareness and practice genre analysis.

Evaluators scored this course objective based on the whole portfolio. The scores represent the extent to which the portfolios in the sample reflect an understanding of genre-specific conventions for at least two genres.

4. The student's portfolio demonstrates **genre awareness**. (*The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres.*)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	N	Mean	Range	N	Mean	N
ENGL 1010	3.45	2 – 5	69	3.15	1.5 – 4.5	37	3.3	106
ENGL 1010D	4.83	4.5 – 5	3	3.58	2 – 4.5	15	3.8*	18
ENGL 1010H	3.83	3 – 4.5	6	2.75	2 – 4	8	3.2	14
ENGL 1010K	3.1	1 – 4	15	3.3	2.25 – 4.5	20	3.2	35
ENGL 1010KD	3	NA	1	3.1	1.5 – 4	5	3.1	6
ENGL 1010L	3.125	2.5 – 4.5	4	3	NA	1	3.1	5
ENGL 1010J	3.04	2.5 – 4	12	2.865	1.5 – 4.5	26	2.9**	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.875	2.25 – 3.5	2	2.9	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.13**	**1.5 – 4.5**	**114**	**3.24**	**224**

C. Conduct primary research.

Evaluators scored this course objective based on the whole portfolio (which included three or more writing samples).

5. The student conducts and incorporates **primary research**. (*The score reflects a student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing. Primary research is information collected by the student by means of interviews, observations, surveys, analyses of trends, etc.*)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	N	Mean	Range	N	Mean	N
ENGL 1010	3.42	2 – 5	69	3.05	1.5 – 4	37	3.3	106
ENGL 1010D	4.83	4.5 – 5	3	3.52	1 – 5	15	3.7*	18
ENGL 1010H	3.75	3 – 4.5	6	3.38	2.5 – 4	8	3.5	14
ENGL 1010K	3.33	1 – 4	15	3.27	1.5 – 4.5	20	3.25	35
ENGL 1010KD	3.5	NA	1	2.5	1 – 3	5	2.5	6
ENGL 1010L	3.375	2 – 4.5	4	3	NA	1	3.3	5

ENGL 1010J	3.29	2.5 – 4	12	2.41	1 – 5	26	2.7***	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.25	2 – 2.5	2	2.25	2
Full Sample	**3.45**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**2.99**	**1 – 5**	**114**	**3.2**	**224**

D. Make appropriate decisions about form and presentation.

Evaluators scored this course objective based on the whole portfolio (which included three or more writing samples).

6. The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate **formatting** and **presentation**.

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.44	2 – 5	69	3.16	1 – 4.5	37	3.3	106
ENGL 1010D	4.5	4 – 5	3	3.63	2 – 5	15	3.8*	18
ENGL 1010H	3.25	1 – 4	6	3.69	2.5 – 4.5	8	3.5	14
ENGL 1010K	3.17	2 – 4	15	3.35	2.25 – 4.5	20	3.2	35
ENGL 1010KD	3.5	NA	1	3.6	2 – 4.5	5	3.6	6
ENGL 1010L	3.25	3 – 4	4	3	NA	1	3.25	5
ENGL 1010J	3.46	2.5 – 4	12	2.84	1.5 – 4	26	3*	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.5	2 – 3	2	2.5	2
Full Sample	**3.45**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.23**	**1 – 5**	**114**	**3.28**	**224**

E. General Writing Skills.

When scoring the following items, readers were asked to weigh the writing sample submitted closest to the end of the semester more heavily in their scoring.

7. The student's writing demonstrates control of **paragraph structure**. (*The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence.*)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.4	2 – 5	69	3.13	1.5 – 5	37	3.3	106
ENGL 1010D	4.83	4.5 – 5	3	3.65	2.75 – 5	15	3.85**	18
ENGL 1010H	4	3.5 – 5	6	3.25	2.5 – 4	8	3.6	14
ENGL 1010K	3.27	1.5 – 4	15	3.15	2.5 – 4	20	3.2	35
ENGL 1010KD	2.5	NA	1	3.1	1.5 – 4	5	3.1	6

ENGL 1010L	3.625	2.5 – 5	4	3	NA	1	3.3	5
ENGL 1010J	2.875	2 – 3.5	12	3	1.5 – 5	26	2.96**	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.5	2.5 – 2.5	2	2.5	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.17**	**1.5 – 5**	**114**	**3.265**	**224**

8. The student's writing demonstrates control of **document-level structure**. (*The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation.*)

	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
Section Type	**Mean**	**Range**	**N**	**Mean**	**Range**	**N**	**Mean**	**N**
ENGL 1010	3.4	2 – 4.5	69	3.25	1.5 – 4.5	37	3.3	106
ENGL 1010D	4.67	4 – 5	3	3.6	2.5 – 5	15	3.8**	18
ENGL 1010H	3.58	3 – 4	6	3.53	3.5 – 4	8	3.55	14
ENGL 1010K	3	2 – 4	15	3.2	2.5 – 4	20	3.1*	35
ENGL 1010KD	3	NA	1	3.3	2 – 4	5	3.3	6
ENGL 1010L	3	2.5 – 4	4	3	NA	1	3	5
ENGL 1010J	3.21	2.5 – 4	12	3.1	1.5 – 5	26	3.1*	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.5	2.5 – 2.5	2	2.5	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.17**	**1.5 – 5**	**114**	**3.28**	**224**

9. The student's writing demonstrates control of **Standard American English structure and usage**. (*The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of mastery of diction appropriate to individual assignments*).

	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
Section Type	**Mean**	**Range**	**N**	**Mean**	**Range**	**N**	**Mean**	**N**
ENGL 1010	3.43	1.5 – 5	69	3.2	2 – 4.5	37	3.35	106
ENGL 1010D	4.67	4.5 – 5	3	3.6	2.5 – 4.5	15	3.8**	18
ENGL 1010H	4	3.5 – 4.5	6	3.5	3 – 4	8	3.7*	14
ENGL 1010K	3.17	2 – 4	15	2.89	1.5 – 4	20	3**	35
ENGL 1010KD	3.5	NA	1	3.5	2 – 4	5	3.5	6
ENGL 1010L	3.625	3 – 4.5	4	3	NA	1	3.5	5
ENGL 1010J	3.21	2.5 – 4	12	3.2	2 – 4	26	3.15*	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.625	2 – 3.25	2	2.6	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.22**	**1.5 – 4.5**	**114**	**3.31**	**224**

10. The student's writing reflects command of appropriate **writing conventions**.
(*The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization*.)

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.4	1.5 – 5	69	3.1	2 – 4.5	37	3.28	106
ENGL 1010D	5	5 – 5	3	3.6	2 – 4.5	15	3.85**	18
ENGL 1010H	3.75	3 – 4.5	6	3.625	3 – 4.5	8	3.7*	14
ENGL 1010K	3.1	1.5 – 4	15	3	1.5 – 4.5	20	3*	35
ENGL 1010KD	3	NA	1	3	1.5 – 4	5	3	6
ENGL 1010L	3.625	3 – 4	4	3	NA	1	3.4	5
ENGL 1010J	3.17	2.5 – 4	12	3	1.5 – 4	26	3.05*	38
ENGL 1010 JH	NA	NA	0	2.625	2 – 3.25	2	2.6	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**3.22**	**1.5 – 4.5**	**114**	**3.25**	**224**

F. Overall Student Progress

11. Overall impression of **student progress**

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no progress; 5 = substantial progress), how much progress in the student's writing ability is reflected by the portfolio (i.e., when comparing the writing in the first vs. the last writing assignment submitted)?

Section Type	Fall 2018			Fall 2019			Combined	
	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	Range	*N*	Mean	*N*
ENGL 1010	3.26	2 – 4.5	69	2.74	1.5 – 4	37	3.04	106
ENGL 1010 Online	3.67	3 – 4	3	3.2	1.5 – 4.5	15	3.25	18
ENGL 1010 Honors	3.42	3 – 4	6	2.875	1.5 – 3.5	8	3.1	14
ENGL 1010 K	3.27	2 – 4	15	2.7	1.5 – 4	20	2.88	35
ENGL 1010 K Online	3.5	NA	1	3.3	1.5 – 4	5	3.3	6
ENGL 1010 L	3.25	3 – 3.5	4	2	NA	1	3.1	5
ENGL 1010 Dual Enrollment	2.75	2 – 3.5	12	2.4	1 – 4.25	26	2.5****	38
ENGL 1010 Dual Enrollment Honors	NA	NA	0	2.25	2 – 2.5	2	2.25	2
Full Sample	**3.4**	**1 – 5**	**110**	**2.7**	**1 – 4.5**	**114**	**2.94**	**224**

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

A. The following conclusions about student attainment of the learning outcomes emerge from these results:

1) In relation to the following 4 writing outcomes evaluated, more than 90% of students in the overall sample performed at a satisfactory level of above:
   - **Outcome 7** (*The student's writing demonstrates control of paragraph structure*)   (93%)
   - **Outcome 8** (*The student's writing demonstrates control of document-level structure*)   (92%)
   - **Outcome 9** (*The student's writing demonstrates control of Standard American English*)   (92%)
   - **Outcome 1** (*A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample*)   (91%)

2) In relation to the following 4 writing outcomes evaluated, more than 85% of students in the overall sample performed at a satisfactory level or above:
   - **Outcome 10** (*The student's writing reflects knowledge of writing conventions*)   (89%)
   - **Outcome 2** (*The student's writing demonstrates awareness of audience*)   (88%)
   - **Outcome 3** (*The student's writing reflects awareness of rhetorical choices*)   (86%)
   - **Outcome 6** (*The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation*)   (86%)

3) In relation to **Outcome 4** (*The student's portfolio demonstrates genre awareness*), 81.5% of the students in the sample performed at a satisfactory level or above.

4) In relation to **Outcome 5** (*The student conducts and incorporates primary research*), 75.5% of the students in the sample performed at a satisfactory level or above.

B. The following conclusions emerge from the between-sections comparisons. These results reflect combined data from Fall 2018 and Fall 2019.

1) The two-sample t-test comparing the sample of students enrolled in online sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 18$) to the sample of students enrolled in regular on-campus sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 106$) showed a statistically significant difference, with online students performing significantly better in terms of all 10 writing outcomes assessed.

2) The two-sample t-test comparing the means of the sample of students enrolled in High School Dual Enrollment sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 38$) to the sample of university students enrolled in regular on-campus sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 106$) showed a statistically significant difference, with high school students scoring significantly lower in outcomes 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

3) The two-sample t-test comparing the means of the sample of students enrolled in prescribed K sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 35$) to the sample of students enrolled in regular sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 106$) showed a statistically significant difference, with students in K sections scoring significantly lower in the writing skills reflected by outcomes 8, 9, and 10.

4) The two-sample t-test comparing the means of the sample of students enrolled in honors sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 14$) to the sample of students enrolled in regular sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 106$) showed a statistically significant difference, with students in honors sections scoring significantly better in the writing skills reflected by outcomes 9 and 10.

5) No other outcomes-related group comparisons revealed statistically significant differences.

6) Finally, comparisons of scores on overall progress in writing ability throughout the semester revealed that the portfolios of high school dual enrollment students ($n = 38$) reflected statistically significantly less progress in writing ability when compared to the portfolios of students enrolled in regular on-campus sections of ENGL 1010 ($n = 106$, $p = 0.0001$).

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain. *(Responses were drafted in light of the results by the General Education English Director, Dr. Kate Pantelides, and Associate Director, Dr. Erica Stone.)*

The English department is continuously striving to improve student outcomes in all its General Education English courses. Below are a number of planned and in-progress initiatives developed in response to these assessment findings:

1. Given the success of the Online ENGL1010 students in the 2018 findings and interest in this course delivery option, we had planned to slowly increase the number of online sections available to students. These plans were preempted by the COVID 19 pandemic, which forced remote instruction faster than we had hoped. Our third year of assessment data will no doubt reveal in part the impact of moving quickly to remote instruction. We developed extensive online teaching resources in response to the transition to remote instruction, and we will further hone and develop these resources to support online and remote instruction in future semesters. Although we are pleased with the relative success of the Online ENGL1010 students, we are eager to consider additional years of assessment for comparison, particularly since there was only one (albeit very successful) student in the 2018 sample, and the 2019 findings demonstrate a similar range in success in relation to the face-to-face courses.

2. Dual enrollment and dual credit programs increase the likelihood of students enrolling in college (Dash). However, there are also indications that these students do not write as effectively in college coursework once they matriculate at the university. There is little empirical data that examines student writing abilities longitudinally as a result of dual enrollment/dual credit programs, but some believe lower scores in formal assessment for students in dual enrollment courses can be attributed to cognitive development and difference in maturation between high school and college aged-students (Hansen, Jackson, McInelly, and Egget). Given our assessment and anecdotal findings regarding the success of online instruction for English 1010, the lower performance of dual enrollment students on the assessment, and anecdotal findings from students and instructors in the program, the General Education English team plans to make the instructional modality for dual enrollment courses more flexible; this may include moving sections online and/or to web-assisted formats. This move to greater flexibility will address some of the concerns this report and other findings indicate impact dual enrollment students, such as shorter class meetings, distraction in the high school learning environment, and challenges in adapting to a college learning environment.

3. Each year we develop extensive professional development in the form of orientation, curriculum meetings, workshops, and print and digital resources. In these materials we will further emphasize the role of primary research and genre in the ENGL1010 curriculum. These are relatively new additions to the curriculum, so though it is not surprising that there is less attention to these areas in the portfolios, it is important that we offer professional development to faculty to ensure that they're familiar with the outcomes and comfortable offering related instruction in their courses.

4. To ensure instructional cohesion across the types of sections of ENGL 1010, the department (i) has held focused meetings of instructors teaching different sections of ENGL 1010, and (ii) has held multiple professional development opportunities throughout the semester to encourage further discussion and ensure consistency across the variety of sections. In particular, we developed an ENGL 1010K Working Group in Spring 2019 to address differences between ENGL1010K and other ENGL1010 sections. Because students place into ENGL1010K because they have an ACT score of 18 or lower, we would expect, as this assessment demonstrates, that students would score lower on outcomes 8, 9,

and 10. Though in the past the reaction to such findings might be intensive grammar drills or related acontextual skills practice, increasingly, purported deficiencies in SAE and associated writing structure and conventions are examined as part of a more complex understanding of students and their learning in reading and writing classrooms. Many of the differences in grammar and sentence structure, in particular, are better recognized now as not incorrect but the demonstration of multiple English grammars (particularly African American Vernacular English), and there is a broadening recognition that multilingual students and students with home dialects that differ from prestige varieties of English traditionally celebrated in university classrooms learn more effectively and prosper in the university when they are invited to compose in multiple languages, dialects, and registers in a classroom setting rather than simply being corrected. Best practices encourage faculty to invite code-meshing in the classroom and to let students make choices about when they want to use SAE and when they want to use home dialects, informal registers, or inclusion of other languages. Distinguishing between when to use certain conventions takes practice and certainly makes assessment more complex. Thus, to complement this assessment data and to better understand the experience of students in our K courses, we have designed an IRB-approved study to examine the affective impact of placement in prescribed English courses on MTSU students. Please find further detail regarding this study in Section 8, "Looking Ahead."

5. Given that progress in writing ability was lower across the board in the 2019 sample, we will work with the General Education English team and the General Education English Committee to better understand the implications of this finding and consider potential curricular responses.

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?
(Responses were drafted in light of the results by the General Education English Director, Dr. Kate Pantelides, and Associate Director, Dr. Erica Stone.)

Although we viewed our first year of ENGL1010 assessment as primarily descriptive, we offered a number of programmatic changes and enhancements in response:

1. During the annual General Education English Orientation in August 2020, the department's General Education Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Aleka Blackwell, presented these results to the faculty. Additional sessions to educate faculty about these findings are planned for AY 2020-2021.
2. The department has expanded its annual General Education English Orientation to incorporate its entire faculty, as opposed to only the graduate teaching assistants who were historically the group targeted by this training session. This change has provided focused professional development to a broader group of English faculty teaching General Education English courses.

3. The General Education English team has created a community D2L shell in support of Orientation that faculty can access throughout the semester. The team has also devoted more of this expanded Orientation time to developing pedagogical materials and demonstrating how to design an effective D2L course shell for ENGL 1010.
4. To address the lower scores in attention to primary research and genre in the portfolios, we invited scholar Tarez Graban as the keynote speaker for the 2019 Peck Symposium on Research on Writing. Dr. Graban spoke expansively on digital research methods and offered a workshop to inform pedagogical practice.
5. To support primary research in ENGL1010, we offered an event for students in Fall 2019 as part of MT Engage week, entitled "Connecting Through Story: An Exploration of Literacy Experiences Literacy Narrative workshop." The two-day event offered a workshop on conducting literacy interviews as well as an opportunity for students to interview each other and record their own literacy narratives in the soundbooth tent that we set up in Walnut Grove. We had planned to hold this event each Fall to support students' primary research and to function as a sister activity to the Spring General Education English event geared toward supporting students' secondary research and presentation skills, the Celebration of Student Writing. Unfortunately we were not able to reprise this event in Fall 2020 because of the COVID 19 pandemic. We hope to hold the event in future semesters when it is safe to do so.

8. Looking ahead *(Responses were drafted in light of the results by the General Education English Director, Dr. Kate Pantelides, and Associate Director, Dr. Erica Stone.)*

The English department is conducting its third round of ENGL 1010 assessment in Fall 2020. We believe that with the exception of the 1010L section participant, year two's data offers more balanced, representative samples of the varieties of English courses. Because there are significant differences in the sample sizes between year 1 and 2 we are reluctant to generalize about the findings. Although there are generally lower scores across outcomes in the ENGL 2019 sample, there is also greater range in scores across all outcomes and section types as is fitting the larger, more varied samples. Thus, we were particularly eager to consider the findings in year three to consider the trends longitudinally. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made Fall 2020 unlike any other year. Many faculty were asked to teach online for the first time. Many students had to take courses online for the first time. And, of course, everyone felt the effects of sickness, unemployment, and the transition to remote learning. MTSU students, in particular, were hit hard by job loss and lack of access to resources. Given these variables, we would like to consider adding a fourth year of assessment.

These assessment findings, as well as our experiences with students and faculty during the pandemic, demonstrate a need to offer accessible professional development outside of regular channels for faculty. Many faculty, and particularly graduate students, regularly attend annual orientation and curriculum meetings offered each semester. However, there are many faculty

who aren't able to attend such events, and because of the high teaching load for all faculty, we need another way to make the course objectives clear, especially those related to primary research and genre. One potential deliverable is a video series about the course objectives for both faculty and students.

To better understand ENGL1010K students and placement in General Education English courses we have piloted a Guided Self Placement Instrument and developed a related IRB approved study. This study aims to investigate the impact that being placed into a prescribed course has on student agency, confidence, and other affective components. We wil begin data collection in Spring 2021.

Scholars have long warned of the "uncritical usage of placement mechanisms and standardized test scores" when assessing writers and their placement into prescribed courses (Mutnick and Lamos 32). Amidst the current global COVID-19 pandemic, more and more universities are no longer requiring standardized test scores as part of admission requirements, the most prominent example being the University of California's recent move to phase out SAT and ACT scores by 2025 (Hubler). Other major institutions are likely to follow suit, as the practice of standardized testing has been critiqued by educators as being biased against minority and working-class students. These test scores often place minority and working-class students in prescribed courses.

Many empirical studies have been conducted on the retention and graduation rates associated with placement in prescribed courses, as well as studies analyzing the cost-benefit ratio for the university in relation to requiring such courses (see Sanabria et al. and Attewell et al.). However, far fewer studies have been done on students' perceptions of being placed into these prescribed courses or the efficacy of such courses on students' long-term trajectories and learning goals. One such study, conducted in 2014 among a group of 15 community college students, found that the students "expressed a collective sense of indignation and dismay at their placement in the lowest level of developmental English" (Schnee 248). Another study, that collected interview data from experienced writing teachers on their perceptions of the term "basic writer," found that "conceiving of students in ways that ignore the complexity of their cultural backgrounds, of both their difficulties and proficiencies with language, affects the students themselves" (VanHaitsma 108). As one strategy to eliminate the bias associated with standardized testing and to promote a sense of agency for all writers and particularly those who might benefit from prescribed courses, some universities are moving towards a directed self-placement strategy for first-year writing (FYW) courses. Scholarship on the validity and presence of such directed-self placement programs are beginning to become more robust (see Balay and Nelson, Crisco et al., and Gere et al.). Less work has been done, however, on students' unique experiences and perceptions of using a directed-self placement tool. One such study found that "students felt that it was part of their right—and privilege—as college students to make decisions about their courses" (Kenner 280). Therefore, proponents of directed-self placement argue that such a structure allows for agency and choice on part of the student.

To be able to better understand the potential of Directed Self-Placement we need to examine the impact of current prescribed placement on college students. Although there is extensive research available that addresses financial implications, graduation rates, and performance, not enough is known about the qualitative student experience. The consequences of the prescribed placement requires further examination in order to understand its impact on agency, confidence, and sense of success. This remains an important and overlooked variable that will better our abilities to reform current practices. Reform presents an opportunity to further eliminate bias inherent in standardized testing that has negatively impacted minority students while preserving the opportunity for prescribed courses for those who believe they would benefit from it. Students have a right to choice in determining their future and education. Further, Directed Self-Placement demonstrates a trust in students that is borne out in empirical study. Although many assume that students will avoid prescribed classes if given the chance, research demonstrates that this is not the case (Kenner 279). When students have an opportunity to participate in their placement, they frequently choose courses that best meet their needs. This is consistent with our preliminary findings in piloting Guided Self-Placement for international students at MTSU. By understanding the lived impact of current placement methodology, we will be better able to implement new programs and systems of support that further our goals for students meeting course outcomes and for educational equity more broadly.

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APPENDIX A

2014-2017 Writing Outcomes Assessment
Note: Writing samples from ENGL 1020

	Writing Outcomes	Year	Superior Score $M = 5, 4.5, 4$	Satisfactory Score $M = 3.5, 3, 2.5$	Unsatisfactory Score $M = 2, 1.5, 1$
A	*The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.*	2014	6.1%	53.5%	40.5%
		2015	6%	66%	28%
		2016	24%	64%	12%
		2017	23%	65%	12%
B	*The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.*	2014	3.9%	44.4%	51.7%
		2015	8%	68%	24%
		2016	16.5%	72.8%	10.7%
		2017	19%	67%	14%
C	*The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.*	2014	3.3%	44.4%	52.2%
		2015	3%	68%	29%
		2016	19%	65%	16%
		2017	20%	65%	15%
D	*Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns*	2014	6.7%	55%	38.3%

	(e.g., narration, example, comparison, contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).	2015	5%	79%	16%
		2016	17.5%	68%	14.5%
		2017	22%	60%	18%

E	*The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.*	2014	2.8%	54.4%	42.8%
		2015	5%	69%	26%
		2016	13.6%	68%	18.4%
		2017	20%	68%	12%

F	*Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.*	2014	2.8%	46.1%	51.1%
		2015	0%	66%	34%
		2016	19.4%	53.4%	27.2%
		2017	19%	63%	18%

APPENDIX B

General Education Writing Outcomes Assessment

English Department

Scoring Instructions

A. <u>We are not conducting portfolio assessment</u>. We collected multiple documents from each student because there is no single *end-of-semester* comparable writing task that we could collect from *all students* to perform an outcomes assessment for ENGL 1010. We collected several writing samples from each student to give us a variety of writing assignments and opportunities for students to shine.

B. Please examine all the submissions for evidence of performance for each outcome/course objective listed below, and <u>*score based on the highest level of achievement reflected in at least one of the writing samples*</u>. Writing samples produced at the end of the semester might reflect the highest level of performance (assuming progress in writing ability throughout the semester) and may, therefore, weigh most heavily in your scoring.

C. Within each set of submissions, the assignment instructions are included for your reference, but you can score the writing samples independent of the assignment requirements. Keep in mind that we are not evaluating whether students can follow directions. <u>We are using the samples to level of performance in relation to each specific writing outcome</u>.

D. The standard of performance for all the evaluation areas listed below should reflect expectations of performance at the completion of a first-semester English composition course at the college level. Please apply the 1-5 scale to measure a student's performance with that standard in mind. As you know, we evaluate ENGL 1020 separately, and we are planning an outcomes assessment for ENGL 2020/2030. This assessment is meant to inform the department about the progress made by students in ENGL 1010 specifically.

Scoring Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient	*Emerging*	*Acceptable*	*Proficient*	*Mastered*

OUTCOMES 1-3

Instructions: Score each of these 3 items BASED ON THE WRITING SAMPLE WHICH REFLECTS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF COMPETENCE ACHIEVED BY THE STUDENT FOR THE ITEM (1= no evidence. 5 = the highest level of performance normally seen among the top students at the conclusion of ENGL 1010). The goal is to determine the upper limits of performance in each of these areas for each student; you can, therefore, use a different submission for each item.

1. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of purpose.
(*A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample*.)

2. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of audience.
(*The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience.*)

3. The student's writing reflects awareness of rhetorical choices.
(*The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation*.)

OUTCOME 4

Instructions: Score the following item based on the whole portfolio. Evaluate the extent to which the student has developed an understanding of genre-specific conventions for at least two genres. Note: If the assignments were not designed to reflect the student's development of genre awareness, please enter NA for this item for this student.

4. The student's portfolio demonstrates genre awareness.
(*The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres.*)

OUTCOME 5

Instructions: Score the following item based on a relevant writing sample.
5. The student conducts and incorporates primary research.
(*Evaluate the student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing. Primary research is information collected by the student by means of interviews, observations, surveys, analyses of trends, etc.*)

OUTCOME 6

Instructions: Score the following item based on the whole portfolio.
6. Student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.

OUTCOMES 7-10

Instructions: When scoring the following items, please weigh the writing sample submitted closest to the end of the semester more heavily in your scoring.

7. Student's writing demonstrates control of paragraph structure.
(*The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence.*)

8. Student's writing demonstrates control of document-level structure.

(*The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation.*)

9. Student's writing demonstrates control of Standard American English structure and usage.
(*The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of diction.*)

10. Student's writing reflects command of appropriate writing conventions.
(*The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization.*)

FINAL AREA OF EVALUATION

11. Overall impression of student progress.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no progress; 5 = substantial progress), how much progress in the student's writing ability is reflected by the portfolio (i.e., when comparing the writing in the first vs. the last writing assignment submitted)?

1. **Identify the Performance-Funding test of general education used by your institution.**

   California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)

2. **If you used sampling as permitted by THEC, describe the method used.**

   Sampling was not used.

3. **Present the institutional mean scores or sub-scores on the Performance Funding instrument that your institution reviewed to assess students' comprehension and evaluation of arguments. If comparable scores for a peer group are available, also present them.**

   MTSU = 16.09; National = 15.40

4. **Summarize your impressions of the results yielded by the THEC test regarding critical thinking. Based upon your interpretations of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of critical thinking skills?**

   The CCTST requires students to draw inferences, make interpretations, analyze information, draw warranted inferences, identify claims and reasons, and evaluate the quality of arguments using brief passages, diagrams, and charts. The 2019-2020 score for MTSU students (16.04) did show a slight decline from the 2018-2019 score (16.17) but was still above the national average (15.40). Comparatively, MTSU scores are still below their 2014-2015 (16.7) and 2013-2014 (16.9) levels.

5. **Do you plan any strategies to correct deficiencies or opportunities for improvement that emerged with respect to critical thinking? If so, describe them below.**

   MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (MT Engage), which was implemented in fall 2016, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, specifically integrative thinking and critical reflection. We will continue to encourage faculty to certify their courses as a MT Engage course.

The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) continues to offer workshops that help faculty incorporate strategies for improving critical thinking. For example, the LT&ITC offered workshops on topics such as course redesign for increased student engagement, active learning, various workshops on course and assignment design, problem-based learning, and experiential learning and MT Engage pedagogies (including the use of ePortfolios to encourage integrative thinking and assessment), etc. No workshops were offered in April of 2020, as the university went online during the pandemic. However, workshops were offered throughout the summer to support faculty as they transitioned from on-ground to online courses.

All General Education courses emphasize the development of critical thinking skills. The three required courses in the Communication category, in particular, provide incoming students with an introduction to the critical and analytical skills necessary for success in college. Small class size in these courses is essential to insure that students receive the individual attention they need to develop these skills. The General Education Committee has recommended to the Provost that class size in the courses in the Communication category not exceed the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Communication Association. The General Education Committee continues to recommend that class size not exceed the guidelines endorsed by professional organizations.

Critical thinking skills will continue to be emphasized in General Education and in each degree program (see Institutional Effectiveness Reports for the various majors).

Instructors of UNIV 1010 will continue to assign textbooks that contain a critical thinking component.

Tutoring in the University Writing Center emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills in the writing process. Instructors will continue to encourage students to work with the Center's trained tutors.

The University Library Research Coach service (which offers students in-depth, one-on-one sessions with a librarian) emphasizes critical thinking in finding and selecting the best books, articles, and database resources for projects, papers, and presentations. Instructors will continue to advise students to use this service.