



## **History of the Program**

Assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education, and the expectation calls for increased accountability. Section 2.7.3 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) accreditation standards requires in each undergraduate program the successful completion of a general education component that:

- 1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
- 2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and
- 3) is based on a coherent rationale.

Section 3.5.1 of the SACS accreditation standards also requires that “the institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.”

Based on these standards, in 2005, the Provost charged the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) with developing and implementing an assessment program. To accomplish this directive, the committee developed and modified rubrics to measure student performance in the competencies stated in the preamble of the general education plan: “The general education program at the University of Louisville fosters active learning by asking students to:

- 1) think critically,
- 2) to communicate effectively,
- 3) and understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

The GECC initiated the first general education assessment in fall of 2005 and completed cycle one of assessment of general education requirements across all academic units in spring 2010. A report summarizing the assessment process and the results of general education assessment results for cycle one was compiled and published as an appendix of the *Faculty Senate Five-Year Report through 2010*.

As an ongoing initiative, in fall 2010, the GECC implemented a new process for the collection and assessment of general education documents. LiveText is “a leading provider of campus-wide solutions for strategic planning, assessment, and institutional effectiveness” (LiveText, 2014). The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) has successfully used LiveText for outcomes assessment for a number of years, and the LiveText organization coordinated with the Assessment Subcommittee and a team of faculty and administrators from the CEHD in the development of a LiveText assessment model. This model enables the GECC to evaluate general education assessment data at multiple levels using customizable reports and uses that data to help advance students in their application of critical thinking and communication skills and their ability to demonstrate an appreciation of a racially and culturally diverse world.

To date, the GECC continues to use the LiveText platform to move forward with UofL's general education assessment. This report summarizes the process, results, and findings for the assessment of student performance in general education Written Communication (WC) courses for the spring 2014 semester.

### **Assessment Administration**

On May 7, 2013, the GECC adopted a plan for systematically assessing the validity and reliability of the current General Education Program assessment rubrics. In the fall of 2010, the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) initiated a focused pilot assessment of the comprehensive Critical Thinking Rubric and related data from the second cycle of general education assessment. Based on the results from the validity and reliability testing, modifications to the assessment model and rubrics were made and implemented for the assessment of student performance in WC courses during the spring 2014 semester.

#### *Modifications to the Assessment Model*

As a result of the validity and reliability testing, the following modifications were made to the assessment model. First, the number of raters for each assessment was increased from two to three per artifact, with increased focus on using raters with expertise in each content area outlined in the General Education Plan. Second, all assessment rubrics (Critical Thinking, Cultural Diversity, and Effective Communication) will be applied to assessment artifacts when applicable. Third, the GECC will interpret and report assessment results using an SLO/Assessment-driven template. Finally, assessors have been trained to use the "NA" category in LiveText to correspond with the *Not Requested* scoring heading for the assessment rubrics. Based on recommendations from the Assessment Subcommittee and the team of CEHD faculty and administrators, in 2012, a *Not Requested* scoring heading was applied to the Critical Thinking Rubric. Assessors can select the *Not Requested* scoring heading on the Critical Thinking Rubric if they determine that an assignment prompt did not require students to demonstrate a particular competency measure. In an effort to create alignment among the five assessment rubrics (Critical Thinking Rubric, Effective Communication Rubric, Cultural Diversity Rubric, Critical Thinking Rubric for the Natural Sciences, and the Critical Thinking Rubric for Mathematics), these revisions were applied to all five assessment rubrics.

#### *Modifications to the Assessment Rubrics*

Based on the results from the validity and reliability testing, the Critical Thinking Rubric was revised. The Point of View competency measure was redacted from the Critical Thinking Rubric. Adopted from the AAC&U's Critical Thinking Value Rubric and the NEIU's Critical Thinking Rubric, two competency measures were added: an *Implications* competency measure and an *Influence of Context and Assumptions* competency measure.

### **Assessment Process**

For the spring 2014 assessment of WC, the GECC requested that faculty and instructors teaching WC courses submit to the Office of General Education Assessment a copy of one assignment

used for each course, along with responses from every fifth student whose name appear on the alphabetic class roster provided to the faculty/instructor by the assessment coordinator.

Student artifacts were collected and stored in an electronic repository and uploaded into the LiveText assessment management system. A panel of 21 tenured and tenure-track faculty, instructors, and graduate teaching assistants assessed student artifacts using the Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, and Cultural Diversity rubrics. One day prior to the assessment reading, assessors were brought together for a four-hour training session coordinated by a team of CEHD faculty and administrators. In the training session, assessors reviewed the various criteria listed on each rubric and performed a variety of sample readings to benchmark student artifacts. For each of the five competency measures for the Critical Thinking Rubric, assessors were trained to assign a score ranging from one to four: 1-not evident; 2-minimally evident; 3-usually evident; 4-clearly evident. For each of the four competency measures for the Cultural Diversity and Effective Communication rubrics, assessors were trained to assign a score ranging from one to four: 1-not evident; 2-minimally evident; 3-usually evident; 4-clearly evident. Assessors were trained to select the *Not Requested* option (“NA” in LiveText) for each of the three rubrics if they determine that an assignment prompt does not require students to demonstrate a particular competency measure. The assessors scored the benchmark samples and the results were displayed to highlight the reliability in scoring. Assessors then engaged in discussion about the assessment scores that were selected to support the conclusions for why particular scores were selected. In addition, assessors received training to utilize LiveText to score each student artifact uploaded into the LiveText assessment management system.

### **Data Collection Overview**

As of the final spring semester course withdrawal date, 2,048 students were enrolled in 90 sections of general education WC courses. Table 1 presents an enrollment overview of enrollments and artifacts collected:

Table 1. Data Collection Overview

	Sections (Total)	Students (Total)	Sections Collected	Student Artifacts Collected	% Sections Collected	% Student Artifacts Collected <sup>1</sup>
ENGL 101	17	304	5	16	29.4%	5.3%
ENGL 102	70	1689	36	172	51.4%	10.2%
ENGL 105	2	40	2	7	100%	17.5%
WGST 199	1	15	0	0	0%	0%
Total	90	2048	43	195	47.7%	9.5%

<sup>1</sup> It is expected that a small percentage of students did not complete the assignment, in which case, there would be no artifact available to assess.

## Summary of Assessment Data

For the assessment of WC, 190 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty members, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the Critical Thinking, Cultural Diversity, and Effective Communication rubrics. Approximately five student artifacts were discarded on the day of assessment due to processing errors.

### *Critical Thinking*

The five Critical Thinking standards assessed by the Critical Thinking Rubric are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Critical Thinking Rubric Standards

Standard	Description
Standard I	Claim – States thesis; Identifies purpose; Demonstrates recognition of problem or question
Standard II	Evidence – Uses evidence, information, data, observations, experiences, and/or reasons
Standard III	Inference – Makes a logical argument; Develops a line of reasoning based on evidence
Standard IV	Influence of Context and Assumptions
Standard V	Implications – Evaluates Implications, conclusions and consequences

The Critical Thinking Rubric uses a four-point scale, with 4 indicating performance of the standard as “clearly evident” and 1 indicating performance as “not evident.” The criterion for Critical Thinking was arbitrarily set by the assessment coordinator at 60% of artifacts to score a 3 or 4, indicating that at least 60% would perform at either the “usually evident” or “clearly evident” level. Table 3 presents the criterion performance data by each competency standard.

Table 3. Critical Thinking Criterion Performance

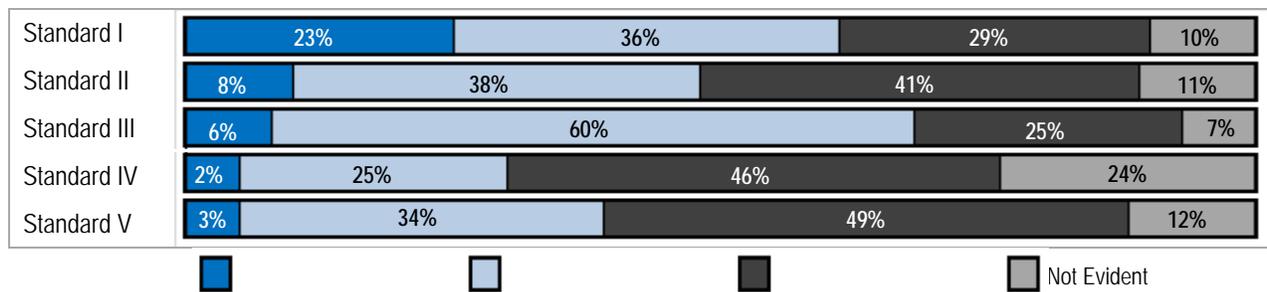
	% of Assignments that Met or Exceeded Criterion	% of Assignments Above/Below Criterion	% of Assignments that Did Not Require Competency
Standard I	59%	-1%	0.0%
Standard II	46%	-14%	0.2%
Standard III	66%	+6%	2.8%
Standard IV	27%	-33%	4.6%
Standard V	37%	-23%	4.4%

The average score for competency measure one was 2.7 and the most frequent score was 3 (usually evident). The average score for competency measure two was 2.4 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). The average score for competency measure three was 2.7 and the most frequent score was 3 (usually evident). The average score for competency measure four was 2.1 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). The average score for

competency measure five was 2.3 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). Table 4 summarizes the Critical Thinking results.

Table 4. Critical Thinking Results

	Clearly Evident (4 points)	Usually Evident (3 points)	Minimally Evident (2 points)	Not Evident (1 point)	Mean	Mode	Std. Dev.
Standard I	135 (23%)	206 (36%)	169 (29%)	59 (10%)	2.733	3	.937
Standard II	47 (8%)	220 (38%)	237 (41%)	64 (11%)	2.440	2	.798
Standard III	36 (6%)	332 (60%)	142 (25%)	43 (7%)	2.653	3	.716
Standard IV	15 (2%)	139 (25%)	254 (46%)	135 (24%)	2.063	2	.782
Standard V	17 (3%)	190 (34%)	268 (49%)	69 (12%)	2.285	2	.721



Each student artifact was assessed by three readers. Table 5 displays the average score each reader assigned by standard. On the whole, these results indicate that there is strong consistency in ratings across sections and instructors.

Table 5. Critical Thinking Inter-Rater Summary

Standard	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3	Mean	Std. Dev.
Standard I	2.700	2.681	2.819	2.733	0.075
Standard II	2.405	2.424	2.492	2.440	0.046
Standard III	2.626	2.635	2.698	2.653	0.039
Standard IV	1.957	2.166	2.067	2.063	0.105
Standard V	2.249	2.232	2.376	2.286	0.079

### *Cultural Diversity*

The four Cultural Diversity standards assessed by the Cultural Diversity Rubric are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Cultural Diversity Rubric Standards**

Standard	Description
Standard I	Writer recognizes ways that culture shapes behavior and attitudes
Standard II	Writer demonstrates ability to understand the relationship of culture to its environment and history
Standard III	Writer recognizes that cultural groups are internally diverse
Standard IV	Writer brings awareness of cultural diversity to the analysis of problems or issues

The Cultural Diversity Rubric uses a four-point scale, with 4 indicating performance of the standard as “clearly evident” and 1 indicating performance as “not evident.” The criterion for Cultural Diversity was arbitrarily set by the assessment coordinator at 20% of artifacts to score a 3 or 4, indicating that at least 20% would perform at either the “usually evident” or “clearly evident” level. Table 7 presents the criterion performance data by each competency standard.

**Table 7. Cultural Diversity Criterion Performance**

	% of Assignments that Met or Exceeded Criterion	% of Assignments Above/Below Criterion	% of Assignments that Did Not Require Competency
Standard I	22%	+2%	35.7%
Standard II	12%	-8%	39.7%
Standard III	11%	-9%	40.0%
Standard IV	7%	-13%	40.9%

The average score for competency measure one was 2.0 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). The average score for competency measure two was 1.8 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). The average score for competency measure three was 1.6 and the most frequent score was 1 (not evident). The average score for competency measure four was 1.6 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). Table 8 summarizes the Cultural Diversity results.

**Table 8. Cultural Diversity Results**

	Clearly Evident (4 points)	Usually Evident (3 points)	Minimally Evident (2 points)	Not Evident (1 point)	Mean	Mode	Std. Dev.
Standard I	7 (1%)	79 (21%)	179 (48%)	101 (27%)	1.978	2	.754
Standard II	6 (1%)	39 (11%)	181 (52%)	117 (34%)	1.808	2	.698
Standard III	2 (0%)	40 (11%)	133 (39%)	166 (48%)	1.642	1	.707
Standard IV	4 (1%)	22 (6%)	158 (47%)	152 (45%)	1.637	2	.659



Each student artifact was assessed by three readers. Table 9 displays the average score each reader assigned by standard. On the whole, these results indicate that there is strong consistency in ratings across sections and instructors.

Table 9. Cultural Diversity Inter-Rater Summary

Standard	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3	Mean	Std. Dev.
Standard I	1.930	1.916	2.107	1.964	0.107
Standard II	1.732	1.813	1.856	1.800	0.063
Standard III	1.642	1.593	1.713	1.649	0.050
Standard IV	1.633	1.645	1.629	1.636	0.009

### *Effective Communication*

The four Effective Communication standards assessed by the Effective Communication Rubric are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Effective Communication Rubric Standards

Standard	Description
Standard I	Writer articulates clear purpose and employs tone consistent with purpose and audience
Standard II	Writer employs clear and coherent organization
Standard III	Writer demonstrates analysis or synthesis
Standard IV	Writer uses appropriate conventions and style

The Effective Communication Rubric uses a four-point scale, with 4 indicating performance of the standard as “clearly evident” and 1 indicating performance as “not evident.” The criterion for Effective Communication was arbitrarily set by the assessment coordinator at 60% of artifacts to score a 3 or 4, indicating that at least 60% would perform at either the “usually evident” or “clearly evident” level. Table 11 presents the criterion performance data by each competency standard.

Table 11. Effective Communication Criterion Performance

	% of Assignments that Met or Exceeded Criterion	% of Assignments Above/Below Criterion	% of Assignments that Did Not Require Competency
Standard I	66%	+6	0.0%
Standard II	60%	—	0.0%
Standard III	37%	-23	0.0%
Standard IV	74%	+14	0.0%

The average score for competency measure one was 2.9 and the most frequent score was 3 (usually evident). The average score for competency measure two was 2.7 and the most frequent score was 3 (usually evident). The average score for competency measure three was 2.3 and the most frequent score was 2 (minimally evident). The average score for competency measure four was 2.9 and the most frequent score was 3 (usually evident). Table 12 summarizes the Effective Communication results.

Table 12. Effective Communication Results

	Clearly Evident (4 points)	Usually Evident (3 points)	Minimally Evident (2 points)	Not Evident (1 point)	Mean	Mode	Std. Dev.
Standard I	142 (24%)	243 (42%)	143 (25%)	41 (7%)	2.854	3	.976
Standard II	89 (15%)	258 (45%)	174 (30%)	48 (8%)	2.682	3	.836
Standard III	30 (5%)	186 (32%)	295 (51%)	58 (10%)	2.330	2	.728
Standard IV	123 (21%)	307 (53%)	114 (20%)	25 (4%)	2.928	3	.766



Each student artifact was assessed by three readers. Table 13 displays the average score each reader assigned by standard. On the whole, these results indicate that there is strong consistency in ratings across sections and instructors.

Table 13. Effective Communication Inter-Rater Summary

Standard	Assessor 1	Assessor 2	Assessor 3	Mean	Std. Dev.
Standard I	2.826	2.806	2.931	2.854	0.067
Standard II	2.684	2.597	2.766	2.682	0.085
Standard III	2.337	2.277	2.378	2.331	0.050
Standard IV	2.916	2.848	3.021	2.928	0.087

**Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Using General Education Assessment Rubrics**

Tables 14 and 15 presents the data collected from the General Education Assessment of WC for the WC and Understanding Cultural Diversity Student Learning Outcomes.

Table 14. Assessment of WC Student Learning Outcomes

	GECC Rubric Where Assessed								
	CTI	CTII	CTIII	CTIV	CTV	ECI	ECII	ECIII	ECIV
SLO I - Understand and use writing processes including invention, drafting, organizing, revising through multiple drafts, and editing;	Mean: 2.733 Mode: 3								
SLO II - Write clear and effective prose in several forms, demonstrating an awareness of audience and purpose;						Mean: 2.854 Mode: 3			
SLO III - Understand and use appropriate academic textual conventions of presentation, at sentence level and beyond;									Mean: 2.928 Mode: 3
SLO IV - Employ critical thinking processes, such as abstracting, synthesizing, and representing ideas, and developing complex structures for them;	Mean: 2.733 Mode: 3	Mean: 2.440 Mode: 2	Mean: 2.653 Mode: 3	Mean: 2.063 Mode: 2	Mean: 2.285 Mode: 2		Mean: 2.682 Mode: 3	Mean: 2.330 Mode: 2	
SLO V - Collect, select, and integrate material from a variety of sources into their writing, citing it appropriately.		Mean: 2.440 Mode: 2							

Table 15. Assessment of Understanding Cultural Diversity Student Learning Outcomes

	GECC Rubric Where Assessed			
	CDI	CDII	CDIII	CDIV
SLO I - Recognizes that social and cultural systems develop out of adaptation to environmental and historical circumstances;		Mean: 1.808 Mode: 2		
SLO II - Communicate an understanding of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and/or gender are socially constructed;	Mean: 1.978 Mode: 2			
SLO III - Communicate an understanding that different cultures may hold different views of the same issues;			Mean: 1.642 Mode: 1	
SLO IV - Evaluate pertinent information and assertions for relevance, bias, stereotyping, manipulation, and completeness.				Mean: 1.637 Mode: 2

*Limitations*

As demonstrated in Tables 14 and 15, WC and Understanding Cultural Diversity Student Learning Outcomes are assessed within the general education Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, and Cultural Diversity rubrics. However, a limitation of this assessment is that the general education rubrics do not align with the student learning outcomes.

Work Cited

LiveText. (2014). *Your partner for continuous improvement*. Retrieved from <https://www.livetext.com/>