



General Education Assessment of Written Communication (Fall 2016)

History of the Assessment 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, and
- 3) understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

The GECC initiated the first General Education Assessment in fall of 2005. The university adopted LiveText© as the platform for electronic assessment of General Education artifacts in the fall of 2010. The process, results, and findings from each assessment iteration are presented to the GECC to drive continuous improvement of the university’s general education program.

Assessment Administration

The General Education Program at the University of Louisville advances three over-arching competencies: critical thinking, effective communication, and cultural diversity. In addition, the university has defined additional learning outcomes for the following content areas: Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Oral Communication, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Written Communication, and the Cultural Diversity competency area. The University of Louisville Student Learning Outcomes are closely aligned with the Statewide General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

The Fall 2016 assessment was focused on courses in the Written Communication content area. A crosswalk of the outcomes and assessment measures for Written Communication is provided in

Appendix A to demonstrate alignment between the assessment measures, the UofL content area outcomes, and the statewide content area outcomes.

University of Louisville Written Communication Learning Outcomes

Written Communication is the ability to develop and express ideas, opinions, and information in appropriate written forms. To fulfill this requirement, students will complete a substantial amount of writing, including several texts that go through the writing process. Students who satisfy this requirement will demonstrate that they are able to do all of the following:

1. Understand and use writing processes, including invention, drafting, organizing, revising through multiple drafts, and editing;
2. Write clear and effective prose in several forms, demonstrating an awareness of audience and purpose;
3. Understand and use appropriate academic textual conventions of presentation, at sentence level and beyond;
4. Employ critical thinking processes, such as abstracting, synthesizing, and representing ideas, and developing complex structures for them;
5. Collect, select, and integrate material from a variety of sources into their writing, citing it appropriately.

Statewide Written and Oral Communication Student Learning Outcomes

1. Write clear and effective prose in several forms, using conventions appropriate to audience (including academic audiences), purpose, and genre.
2. Listen and speak competently in a variety of communication contexts, which may include public, interpersonal, and/or small-group settings.
3. Find, analyze, evaluate, and cite pertinent primary and secondary sources, including academic databases, to prepare speeches and written texts.
4. Identify, analyze, and evaluate statements, assumptions, and conclusions representing diverse points of view; and construct informed, sustained, and ethical arguments in response.
5. Plan, organize, review, practice, edit, and proofread to improve the development and clarity of ideas.

University of Louisville General Education Rubric Measures

Effective Communication (EC) Rubric

1. Writer articulates clear purpose and employs tone consistent with purpose and audience.
2. Writer employs clear and coherent organization.
3. Writer demonstrates analysis or synthesis.
4. Writer uses appropriate conventions and style.

Critical Thinking (CT) Rubric

1. Claim – States thesis; Identifies purpose; Demonstrates recognition of problem or question.
2. Evidence – Uses evidence, information, data, observations, experiences, and/or reasons.
3. Inference – Makes a logical argument; Develops a line of reasoning based on evidence.
4. Influence of Context and Assumptions.
5. Implications – Evaluates implications, conclusions, and consequences.

Cultural Diversity (CD) Rubric

1. Writer recognizes ways that culture shapes behavior and attitudes.
2. Writer demonstrates ability to understand the relationship of culture to its environment and history.
3. Writer recognizes that cultural groups are internally diverse.
4. Writer brings awareness of cultural diversity to the analysis of problems or issues.

The University of Louisville General Education Rubrics use a four-point scale, with 4 indicating performance of the measure as “clearly evident,” 3 indicating performance as “usually evident,” 2 indicating “minimally evident,” and 1 indicating performance as “not evident.” In addition, a score of “not requested” could be assigned for assignments that did not provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate the criterion within the rubric measure.

Assessment Process

For the fall 2016 assessment of student work from the Written Communication (WC) content area, the Office of General Education Assessment met with the Director of Composition in the English department to review the assessment protocol, the outcomes to be assessed, and sampling process. A formal memo outlining the project and process was also provided to the Director of Composition to distribute to all faculty teaching Written Communication General Education courses prior to the start of the semester to ensure a mutual understanding of project expectations. One WC course from Women and Gender Studies was also included in the assessment and the instructor was contacted directly by the Office of General Education Assessment as the department has been involved in several recent assessments and is familiar with the assessment process.

The initial communication to faculty requested faculty to (a) post syllabi to Blackboard in compliance with the university’s SACS data requirements, (b) select an assignment for the assessment, (c) collect student work and the assignment prompt, and (d) submit files to the Office of General Education Assessment. Prior to the start of the semester, all faculty teaching General Education courses are notified that the syllabi should explicitly list General Education Learning Outcomes and the manner in which the outcomes will be assessed.

After the deadline for dropping and adding a course passed, the Office of General Education Assessment requested the class rosters for all General Education courses in Written Communication from the Office of the Registrar and systematically selected every fifth student for assessment. Course instructors were sent assessment rosters along with detailed instructions

requesting that they provide a copy of the assignment prompt along with the ungraded responses for the selected students to be sent via email to the Assessment Coordinator.

Student artifacts were collected and stored in an electronic repository and uploaded into the LiveText© assessment management system. A panel of 29 faculty (tenured and tenure-track faculty, term faculty, and adjunct faculty) and graduate teaching assistants assessed student artifacts. Assessors applied the university's Effective Communication, Critical Thinking, and Cultural Diversity rubrics to all artifacts. Prior to the assessment reading, assessors were brought together for a four-hour training session coordinated by the Office of General Education Assessment. In response to prior assessment feedback, the background and history of the General Education Assessment, assessment rubrics, and LiveText© instructions were shared in advance to allow for greater focus on practice scoring and discussion during the training session. During the training, faculty engaged in dissection and discussion of rubric criteria, and assessors individually reviewed and scored benchmark sample assignments. Benchmarks were selected assignments that represented a wide range of content and skill development in order to give assessors a baseline for measuring learning expectations and evaluating student performance (Herman, Osmundson, & Dietel, 2010). Assessors then engaged in discussion about the benchmark assessment scores to share their rationales for why particular scores were selected. When discussing the scores that they selected, readers were asked to highlight the rubric language that helped them to determine the score to ensure that assessors were basing their ratings only on the rubric criteria. To highlight the reliability of the training scoring, the results from scoring benchmark samples for the Effective Communication Rubric are provided in Table 1 and Figure 1, Critical Thinking Rubric in Table 2 and Figure 2, Cultural Diversity Rubric in Table 3 and Figure 3.

Table 1

Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Effective Communication

Benchmark Sample 1					
	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
EC1	12.0%	32.0%	44.0%	12.0%	
EC2		28.6%	60.7%	10.7%	
EC3	3.7%	18.5%	77.8%		
EC4		60.7%	35.7%	3.6%	

Benchmark Sample 2					
	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
EC1	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%		
EC2	8.0%	72.0%	16.0%	4.0%	
EC3	18.5%	44.4%	37.0%		
EC4	42.3%	50.0%	7.7%		

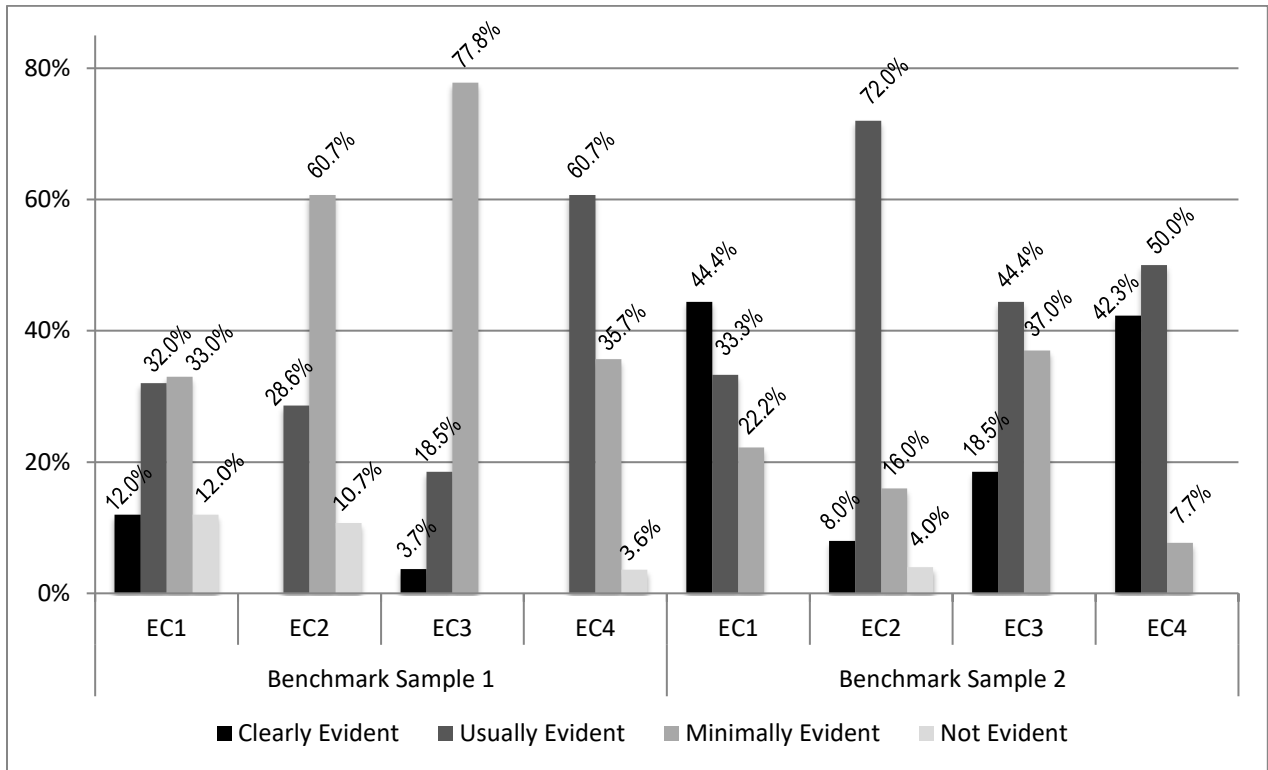


Figure 1. Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Effective Communication

Table 2

Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Critical Thinking

Benchmark Sample 1					
	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
CT1		46.2%	38.5%	15.4%	
CT2		21.4%	75.0%	3.6%	
CT3		46.4%	53.6%		
CT4		25.0%	60.7%	14.3%	
CT5		17.9%	67.9%	14.3%	
Benchmark Sample 2					
	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
CT1	51.9%	48.1%			
CT2	14.8%	66.7%	18.5%		
CT3	14.8%	66.7%	7.4%	11.1%	
CT4	14.8%	29.6%	51.9%	3.7%	
CT5	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%		

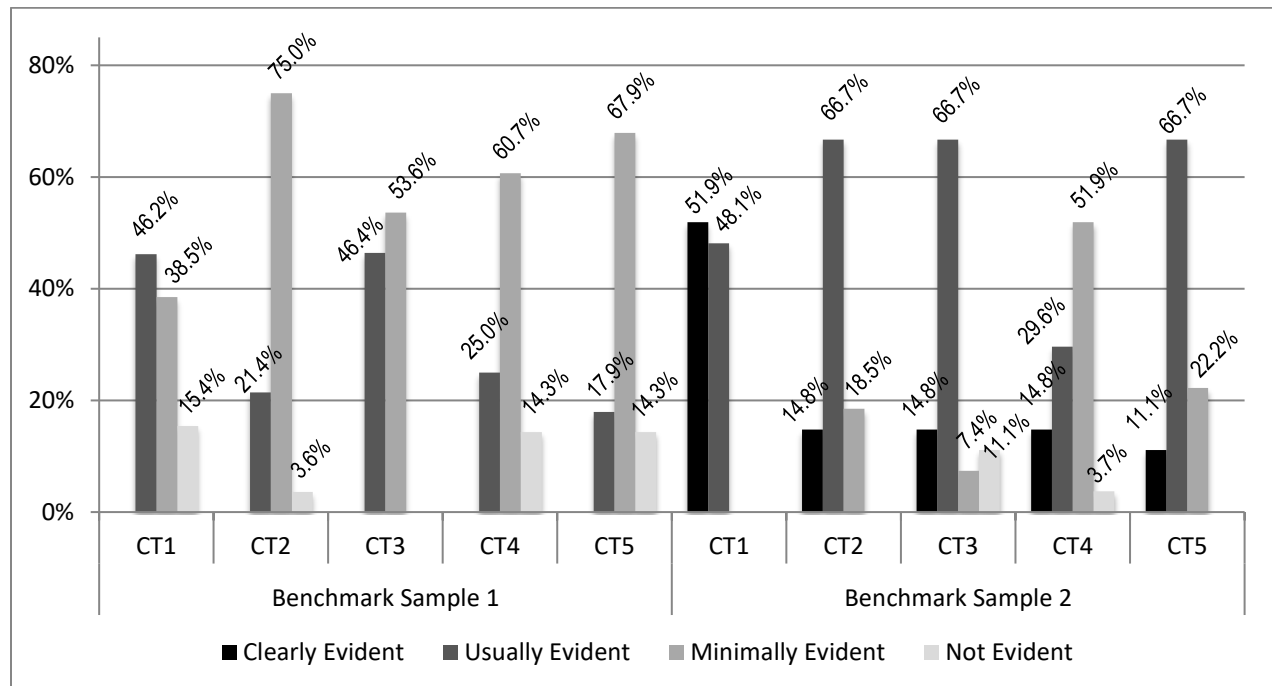


Figure 2. Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Critical Thinking

Table 3

Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Cultural Diversity

Benchmark Sample 1

	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
CD1	4.0%	32.0%	64.0%		3
CD2		10.7%	82.1%	7.1%	
CD3			61.5%	38.5%	
CD4			74.1%	25.9%	

Benchmark Sample 2

	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>
CD1	7.4%	44.4%	48.1%		
CD2	7.4%	37.0%	51.9%	3.7%	
CD3	3.8%	38.5%	42.3%	15.4%	
CD4		33.3%	59.3%	7.4%	

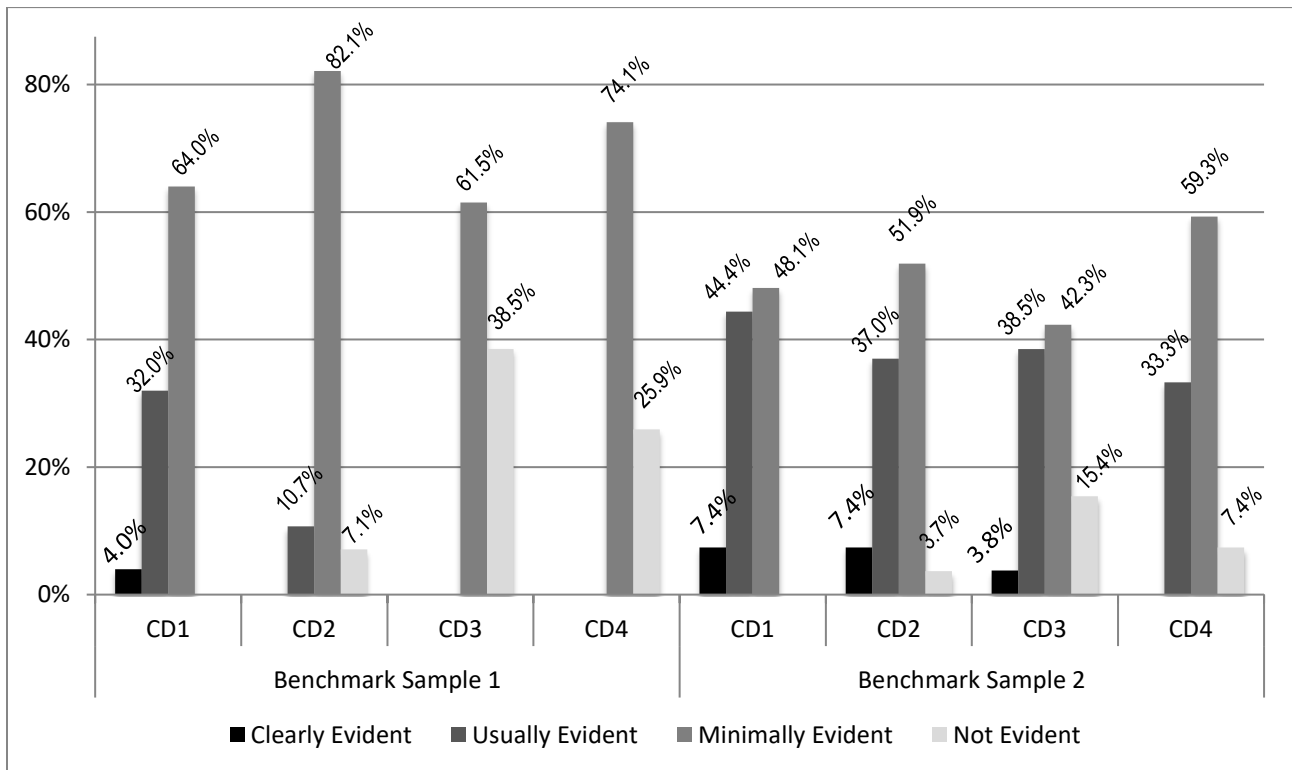


Figure 3. Results of Benchmark Sample Assessments for Cultural Diversity

At the start of the assessment reading day, each faculty assessor was assigned a username and password for one of three LiveText© accounts and a list of courses and sections to assess. Three faculty readers assessed each artifact so that scores could be compared across assessors for reliability purposes.

Data Collection Overview

The enrollment for Written Communication General Education courses was approximately 2500 students after the drop/add deadline. The Office of General Education Assessment received and determined that 305 student artifacts were eligible for review from the Written Communication content area. Of the artifacts received, 269 were assessed on the reading day. Dual-credit courses were included in the assessment sample with 25 artifacts from across multiple sections. The final sample included 52 sections of ENGL 101, 18 sections of ENGL 102, one section of ENGL 105, and one section of WGST 199.

Summary of Assessment Data

For the assessment of Written Communication outcomes, 269 student artifacts were assessed by faculty and graduate teaching assistants from the College of Arts & Sciences, School of Dentistry, College of Education and Human Development, Kent School of Social Work, and the Speed School of Engineering, using the Effective Communication, Critical Thinking, and Cultural Diversity rubrics. A summary of results from the WC assessment is provided in Table 4 and Figure 4.

The target for both the Effective Communication and the Critical Thinking rubric measures was set by the General Education Assessment Coordinator and the General Education Curriculum Committee Assessment Subcommittee at 60% of artifacts to score at a 3 or 4, indicating that at least 60% demonstrate performance at either the “usually evident” or “clearly evident” level. The target was met for EC1, EC2, EC4, CT1, CT3, and CT5. The target was not met for was not met for EC3, CT2, and CT4.

The target for the Cultural Diversity Rubric was set by the General Education Assessment Coordinator and the General Education Curriculum Committee Assessment Subcommittee at 40% of artifacts to score at a 3 or 4, indicating that at least 40% would perform at either the “usually evident” or “clearly evident” level. The target was met for CD1 and was not met for CD2, CD3, and CD4.

Table 4

Summary Results for Written Communication Assessment

Effective Communication

	<u>Clearly Evident</u>	<u>Usually Evident</u>	<u>Minimally Evident</u>	<u>Not Evident</u>	<u>Not Requested</u>	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u>
EC1	43.4% (350)	35.8% (289)	15.5% (125)	5.3% (43)	0	79.2%
EC2	26.8% (216)	37.9% (306)	28.4% (229)	6.9% (56)	0	64.7%
EC3	16.9% (136)	34.9% (282)	41.1% (332)	7.1% (57)	0	51.8%
EC4	34.8% (281)	46.5% (375)	15.7% (127)	3.0% (24)	0	81.3%

Critical Thinking

	Clearly Evident	Usually Evident	Minimally Evident	Not Evident	Not Requested	% Above (3 or 4)
CT1	41.8% (336)	29.1% (234)	18.8% (151)	10.3% (83)	3	70.9%
CT2	20.1% (162)	37.9% (306)	34.0% (274)	8.1% (65)	0	58.0%
CT3	19.0% (153)	58.5% (472)	19.0% (153)	3.6% (29)	0	77.4%
CT4	11.2% (90)	31.0% (250)	40.0% (323)	17.8% (144)	0	42.1%
CT5	14.1% (114)	45.8% (370)	34.9% (282)	5.1% (41)	0	60.0%

Cultural Diversity

	Clearly Evident	Usually Evident	Minimally Evident	Not Evident	Not Requested	% Above (3 or 4)
CD1	14.5% (107)	30.5% (225)	31.6% (233)	23.3% (172)	70	45.0%
CD2	11.0% (80)	22.4% (163)	37.1% (270)	29.5% (215)	79	33.4%
CD3	7.1% (51)	20.9% (151)	31.6% (228)	40.4% (291)	86	28.0%
CD4	8.1% (58)	15.3% (109)	34.6% (247)	41.9% (299)	94	23.4%

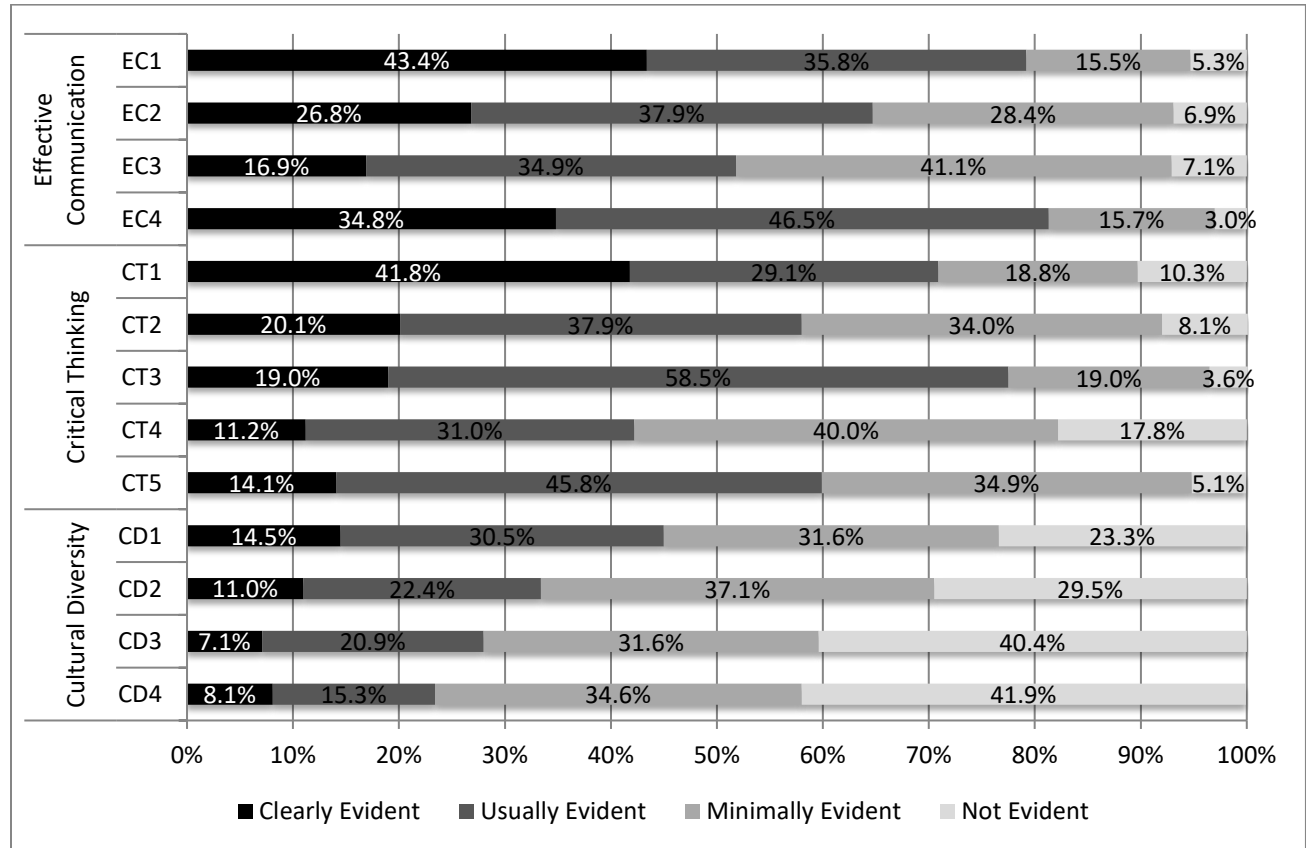


Figure 4. Summary Results for Written Communication Assessment

The mean and mode for each rubric measure is provided in Table 5 and Figures 5 and 6. The mode was at the “clearly evident” level for EC1 and CT1. The mode was at the “usually evident”

level for EC2, EC4, CT2, CT3, and CT5. The mode was at the “minimally evident” level for EC3, CT4, CD1, and CD2. The mode was at the “Not Evident” level for CD3 and CD4.

The “not requested” scores were excluded from calculation of the percentage of overall ratings (Table 5), and mean and mode (Table 6). A count of “not requested” is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean and Mode by Rubric for Written Communication Assessment
Effective Communication

	<u>EC1</u>	<u>EC2</u>	<u>EC3</u>	<u>EC4</u>
Mean	3.17	2.85	2.62	3.13
Mode	4	3	2	3

Critical Thinking

	<u>CT1</u>	<u>CT2</u>	<u>CT3</u>	<u>CT4</u>	<u>CT5</u>
Mean	3.02	2.70	2.93	2.35	2.69
Mode	4	3	3	2	3

Cultural Diversity

	<u>CD1</u>	<u>CD2</u>	<u>CD3</u>	<u>CD4</u>
Mean	2.36	2.15	1.95	1.90
Mode	2	2	1	1

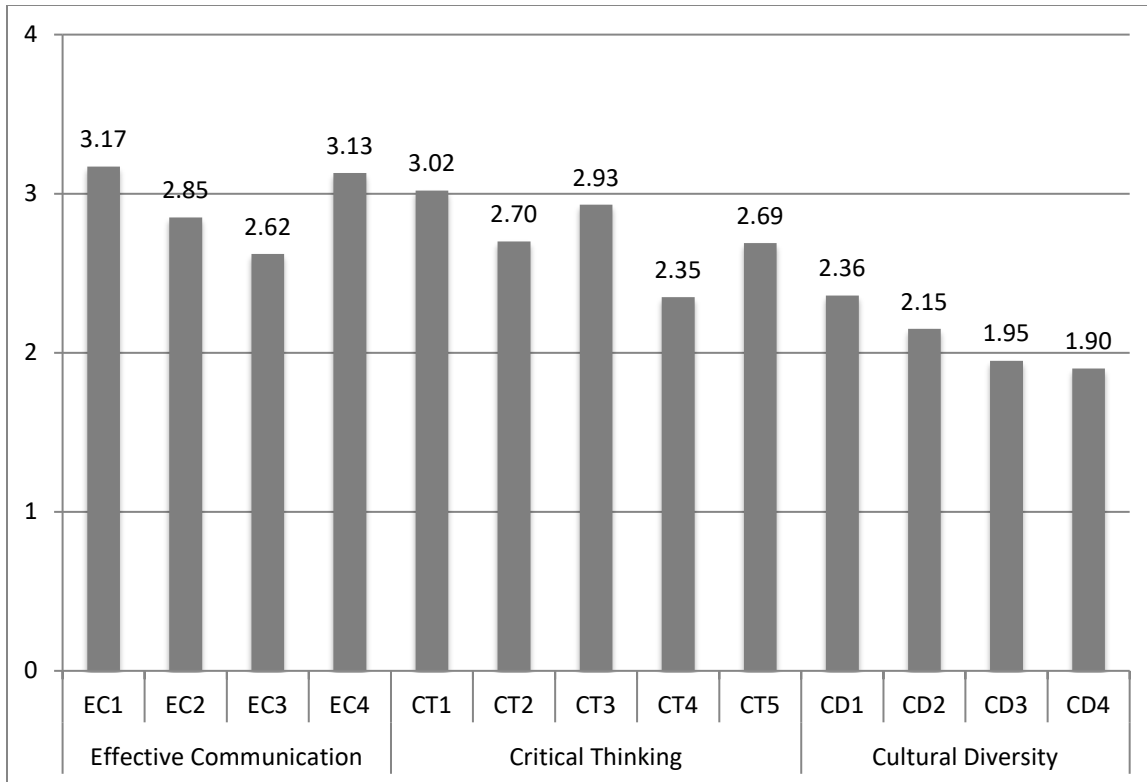


Figure 5. Mean Score by Rubric Measure for Written Communication Assessment

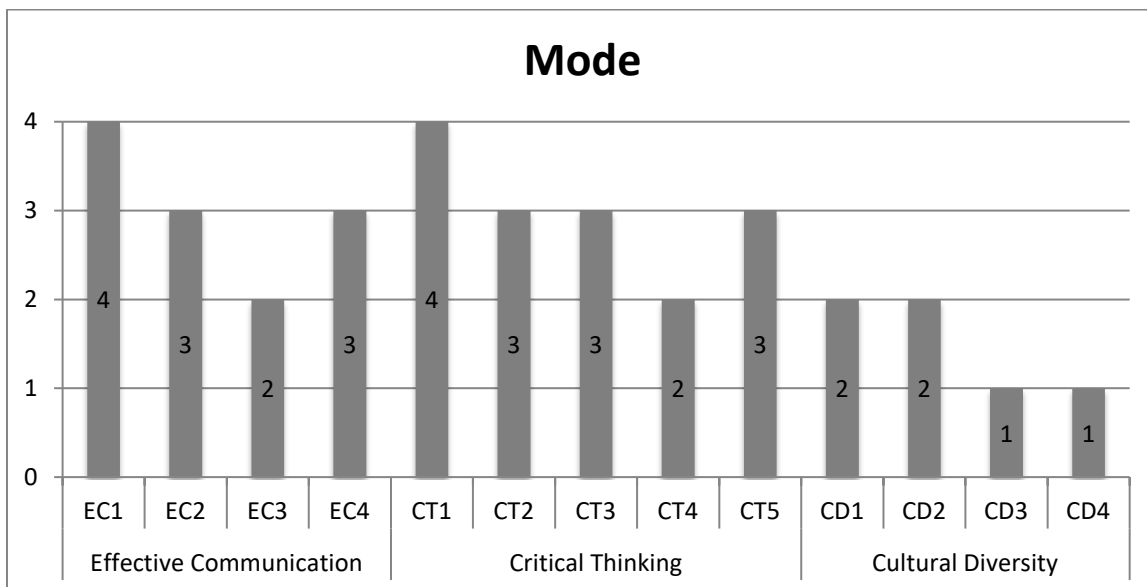


Figure 6. Mode by Rubric Measure for Written Communication Assessment

Inter-rater Reliability

Three separate readers assessed each student artifact. Table 6 displays the mean score for the three separate readings of all artifacts.

Table 6

Inter-rater Summary for Written Communication Assessment Effective Communication

	<u>Assessor 1</u>	<u>Assessor 2</u>	<u>Assessor 3</u>	<u>SD</u>
EC1	3.16	3.15	3.21	.03
EC2	2.76	2.82	2.96	.10
EC3	2.44	2.61	2.80	.18
EC4	3.13	3.17	3.09	.04

Critical Thinking

	<u>Assessor 1</u>	<u>Assessor 2</u>	<u>Assessor 3</u>	<u>SD</u>
CT1	2.89	3.11	3.07	.12
CT2	2.60	2.63	2.87	.14
CT3	2.85	2.94	2.99	.07
CT4	2.19	2.24	2.63	.24
CT5	2.54	2.71	2.82	.14

Cultural Diversity

	<u>Assessor 1</u>	<u>Assessor 2</u>	<u>Assessor 3</u>	<u>SD</u>
CD1	2.43	2.27	2.40	.09
CD2	2.20	2.03	2.24	.11
CD3	1.91	1.84	2.09	.13
CD4	1.92	1.83	1.95	.06

In addition to the descriptive statistics, Table 7 provides multiple measures of inter-rater reliability. The percentage agreement value was calculated to determine the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors scored at the same performance level or within one level. Values for *Total Agreement* provided in Table 7 represent the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors selected the same score (e.g., Assessors 1, 2, and 3 all selected 3). *Agreement (within 1 level)* represents the percentage of artifacts for which all three assessors scored the artifact at the same performance level or within one level (e.g., Assessor 1 selected a score of 3, Assessor 2 selected a score of 2, and Assessor 3 also selected a score of 2).

In addition to percentage agreement, a one-way, average-measures intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated to assess inter-rater reliability. ICC coefficients between .75 and 1.00 are considered excellent, .60 to .74 considered good, .40 to .59 fair, and below .4 is considered poor (Cicchetti, 1994). Based upon these criteria, inter-rater reliability was acceptable

for all measures. Although the ICC for some of the rubric measures was just below the .4 cutoff, the 95% confidence intervals were still within the acceptable range.

Table 7

Inter-rater Reliability for Written Communication Assessment
Effective Communication

<u>Competency Measure</u>	<u>Total Agreement</u>	<u>Agreement (within 1 level)</u>	<u>ICC</u>	<u>95% Confidence Interval</u>
EC1	19.7%	69.5%	.43	(.31-.54)
EC2	10.0%	61.3%	.38	(.23-.50)
EC3	15.6%	63.6%	.37	(.23-.49)
EC4	20.8%	79.6%	.54	(.44-.63)

Critical Thinking

<u>Competency Measure</u>	<u>Total Agreement</u>	<u>Agreement (within 1 level)</u>	<u>ICC</u>	<u>95% Confidence Interval</u>
CT1	13.0%	56.1%	.45	(.32-.56)
CT2	14.5%	63.9%	.40	(.26-.51)
CT3	23.0%	78.8%	.28	(.12-.42)
CT4	14.1%	59.5%	.37	(.23-.50)
CT5	17.8%	73.6%	.41	(.28-.52)

Cultural Diversity

<u>Competency Measure</u>	<u>Total Agreement</u>	<u>Agreement (within 1 level)</u>	<u>ICC</u>	<u>95% Confidence Interval</u>
CD1	8.2%	42.0%	.38	(.22-.52)
CD2	8.2%	47.2%	.46	(.32-.58)
CD3	8.9%	46.5%	.39	(.22-.53)
CD4	11.5%	52.0%	.51	(.38-.62)

Summary and Plan for Improvement

Results from the application of the Effective Communication, Critical Thinking, and Cultural Diversity rubrics are consistent with previous assessments from across the General Education Curriculum. For effective communication, students continue to score higher on stating a clear purpose, employing coherent organization, and using appropriate conventions and style, while not demonstrating analysis and synthesis at the same level. With the critical thinking measures, students tend to perform higher on stating their thesis, providing evidence, and making an argument, however they do not demonstrate a strong understanding of the influence of context and assumptions or the implications related to the assignment topic. There continues to be a high volume of assignments scored as “not requested” on the Cultural Diversity rubric. This indicates that the general education curriculum and specifically assignments selected for assessment are not aligned with the measures outlined in the Cultural Diversity Rubric.

Table 8

Written Communication Assessment Results 2014 and 2016

Effective Communication

	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2014</u>	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2016</u>
EC1	67.7%	79.2%
EC2	61.0%	64.7%
EC3	38.0%	51.8%
EC4	75.6%	81.3%

Critical Thinking

	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2014</u>	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2016</u>
CT1	59.9%	70.9%
CT2	47.0%	58.0%
CT3	66.5%	77.4%
CT4	28.4%	42.1%
CT5	38.1%	60.0%

Cultural Diversity

	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2014</u>	<u>% Above (3 or 4)</u> <u>2016</u>
CD1	23.5%	45.0%
CD2	13.1%	33.4%
CD3	12.3%	28.0%
CD4	7.7%	23.4%

A comparison of results from the 2014 Written Communication Assessment with the current assessment demonstrates an improvement in student performance on all rubric measures. Table 8 provides the percentage of artifacts scored at a 3 or 4, indicating “clearly evident” or “usually evident,” for both 2014 and 2016.

Assessment Instrumentation

The university is currently undergoing a General Education program revision. With a pending revision to the program and the assessment of student learning outcomes within the program, the GECC has determined that no further revisions will be made to the existing assessment instruments. The Office of General Education Assessment will continue to capture feedback on the assessment instruments to help guide the development of new instruments when the new General Education program goes into effect.

Measures and Targets

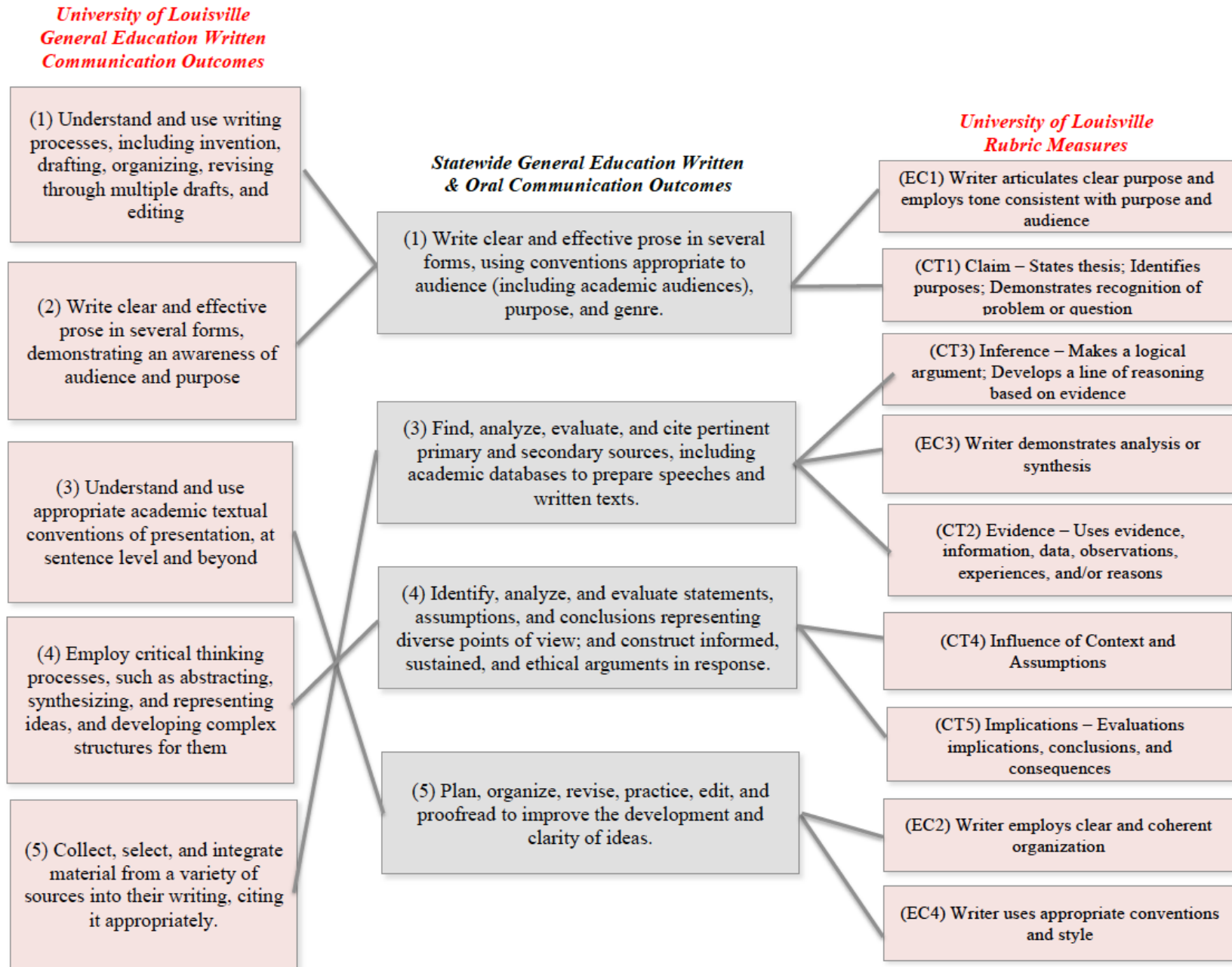
For the assessment of Written Communication content area courses, a target was set at 60% of students demonstrating the outcomes at the “clearly evident” or “usually evident” level for the

Critical Thinking and Effective Communication rubrics and 40% for the Cultural Diversity rubric. While the target was met for some of the rubric measures, not all were met. The comparison in results from 2014 to 2016 demonstrate departments have been working diligently to incorporate the outcomes in the curriculum and the GECC requests that the academic departments continue these efforts, especially for areas where the targets were not met.

References

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Appendix A: Outcomes and Assessment Measures Crosswalks



Appendix B

General Education Written Communication Syllabus Review (Fall 2016)

History of the Syllabus Review

In 2012, the General Education Syllabus Review Project was initiated to evaluate the congruence of general education course syllabi with the approved content-specific general education student learning outcomes. Specifically, it was designed to determine: (a) if the student learning outcomes stated in each course syllabus are congruent with the approved content-specific general education learning outcomes, and (b) if corresponding assessment methods are stated that support the approved content-specific general education learning outcomes.

In the spring of 2015, the GECC Assessment Subcommittee proposed that the Syllabus Review Project be incorporated into the existing General Education Assessment Project. Therefore, the syllabi from each content area will be collected and reviewed by the Office of General Education Assessment in alignment with the corresponding assessment cycle.

This report summarizes the review process and the results of the syllabi review for the Written Communication content area.

Review Process

The Provost requests that all faculty load their syllabi to Blackboard® each semester. These syllabi are then available through the university's course catalog system. For the purpose of this review, the Office of General Education Assessment collected all Written Communication syllabi that were loaded to Blackboard in fall 2016.

The review of syllabi sought to answer two questions:

- 1) Does the syllabus contain the content specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course?
- 2) Are assessment methods stated that support the content-specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course?

An evaluation of the congruence between the listed assessment methods with the content specific approved general education learning outcomes was not conducted when a reviewer determined that the syllabus does not contain a statement of the approved content specific general education learning outcomes.

Written Communication

The syllabus review included syllabi from 108 of the Written Communication General Education course sections offered in the Fall of 2016 resulting in a 100.0% sample. Appendix Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number of General Education of syllabi available, the number of

syllabi with the outcomes stated, and the number of syllabi that also included the assessment methods.

Table 1.

Written Communications Sample

	<u>Syllabi Available</u>	<u>Outcomes Listed in Syllabus</u>	<u>Assessment Method</u>
WC Courses	108, (100%)	102, (94.4%)	76, (74.5%)

The review of the 108 General Education Written Communication syllabi identified 102 syllabi (94.4%) containing the content-specific general education learning outcomes approved for the course. Further review of the 102 syllabi containing the General Education Outcomes revealed that 76 syllabi (74.5%) also listed the assessment methods for the General Education Outcomes.