

**Department of English
2017 Assessment
Gen Ed**

Contents

Composition 2
Freshman World Literature 8

Our Introduction to World Literature and Introduction to Creative Writing have not yet been in the Core long enough for meaningful data collection.

PROGRAM IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION
2017 ASSESSMENT REPORT
Re: ENGL 1033: Technical Composition
(Composition II option in the core-curriculum)

Prepared and Submitted by

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Prepared for the Dean of the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
University of Arkansas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This program assessment report confirms the current effectiveness of ENGL 1033: Technical Composition, under the purview of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition (PRC). The report describes the methods used in the PRC's most recent assessment, discusses the ramifications of the results of the assessment, and offers suggestions to improve teaching and assessment strategies.

The assessment described herein is based on data generated from 150 students enrolled in 13 sections of ENGL 1033: Technical Composition that were taught in the Department of English during the spring 2017 semester. This assessment of the second course option satisfying the first-year composition requirement (ENGL 1013 and ENGL 1023) complements the previous year's report regarding the effectiveness of the core first-year composition courses overseen by the PRC.

The conclusion that may be drawn from the data yielded by this assessment is that the PRC is successfully meeting the course goals established for first-year composition in light of the competencies established for the technical writing option herein discussed. In addition to the findings pertinent to the current iteration of ENGL 1033, this report offers further consideration for future course assessment in light of projected changes to the technical writing curriculum overseen by the PRC.

INTRODUCTION

The Program in Rhetoric and Composition (PRC) submits the following report in fulfillment of the self-assessment mandated by Fulbright College. This report is based on data generated from 150 students enrolled in 13 sections of ENGL 1033: Technical Composition. These sections were taught in the Department of English during the spring 2017 semester. The data indicate a clear satisfaction on behalf of the students with the overall effectiveness of the course. The following report will describe the methods used for this assessment, discuss the ramifications of the results of the assessment, and offer suggestions to improve teaching and assessment strategies.

ASSESSMENT METHODS AND RESULTS

Methods

Students enrolled in the 13 sections of ENGL 1033 offered during the spring 2017 semester were administered an exit survey upon completing the course. These students were given time during the final week of classes during the spring 2017 semester to answer an eleven-item exit survey (SEE APPENDIX A) in which they were asked to rate their agreement, on a five-point Likert scale, that the course successfully fulfilled its stated learning objectives. Across all 13 sections, 150 of the 236 enrolled students, or 64%, completed the exit survey. This survey was distributed through Google Forms to ensure the students anonymity and ease of access.

The instructors of these 13 sections, all graduate teaching assistants in the department of English, were also administered an exit survey upon completing the course (SEE APPENDIX B). This survey asked instructors to rate their agreement, on a five-point Likert scale, that their students had successfully achieved the course's stated learning objectives. This survey was also distributed through Google Forms to ensure the instructors anonymity and ease of access. Six of the seven instructors teaching ENGL 1033 during the spring 2017 semester responded to the survey.

Results

The data yielded by the above methods strongly suggest that ENGL 1033 is achieving its goals to the satisfaction of the students enrolled. The purpose of ENGL 1033 is to teach engineering and business students the principles of effective written communication. The specific goal of this course is to introduce students to the practice of technical composition by addressing the principles, procedures, and formats used in preparing some of the types of documents composed by engineering students and working engineers. In accordance with the stated purpose of the course, students will learn, among other things, how to:

- analyze rhetorical situations;
- identify authoritative sources in their discipline;
- draft documents according to common forms used for technical writing purposes;
- recognize the demands that particular audiences place on written communication;
- use electronic resources to support library research;
- generate a set of principles that will guide their sense of effective writing practices; and
- practice academic integrity and ethical communicative aims.

Of the 150 students surveyed (64% of the 236 students enrolled at the beginning of spring 2017), an overwhelming percentage responded positively to what they learned in the course. On average, 80.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the course was a success according to the specific goals listed above. On average 32.3% strongly agreed and 48% agreed.

The strongest areas of the course, according to students' responses, regard the teaching of the common forms associated with technical writing purposes. Specifically, students felt particularly well prepared to write memos (89.4% agreed or strongly agreed), business letters (86% agreed or strongly agreed), and process instructions (86% agreed or strongly agreed).

The weakest area of the course, according to students' responses, regarded proper use of electronic sources to support library research. Less than two thirds (62%) of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed they had successfully been taught this research skill, whereas almost another third (27.3%) were ambivalent. Only 10.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed, but students still disagreed with this item most strongly.

The instructors' responses to the items on the exit survey largely support the students' assessment of the course's success. On average, 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed that the course was a success according to the specific goals listed above. On average 28.8% strongly agreed and 54.5% agreed.

The strongest areas of the course, according to instructors' responses, also regard the teaching of the common forms associated with technical writing purposes. Specifically, instructors felt that their students learned particularly well the conventions for writing business letters (100% agreed or strongly agreed), memos (100% agreed or strongly agreed), and process instructions (100% agreed or strongly agreed). The instructors were also all in agreement that their students learned to analyze the rhetorical situations common to technical fields.

CONCLUSION

Given the above results, the PRC concludes that ENGL 1033 currently achieves its stated course goals to the satisfaction of the student population served by the course. While the PRC acknowledges that the instructors sample size was relatively small, the responses to the instructors' exit survey aligned well with the responses to the students' exit survey, demonstrating that both instructors and students feel that the course is successfully meeting its stated purpose.

Given that ENGL 1033 is currently being redesigned by a specialist in technical writing in order to bring the course in line with a projected three-course sequence in technical and professional writing, the Curriculum Specialist recommends that the new course design more fully account for the use of electronic sources to supplement library research. The Curriculum Specialist further recommends revising assessment methods and reassessing the course once the new version has been implemented.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT EXIT SURVEY

Please read the following items carefully and rate your agreement with each statement. To indicate your agreement, circle the appropriate number on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. This course taught me to analyze rhetorical situations, particularly those common to technical fields.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. This course taught me to identify authoritative sources in my discipline.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. This course taught me the conventions for drafting effective memos.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. This course taught me the conventions for drafting effective business letters.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. This course taught me the conventions for drafting effective extended definitions.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. This course taught me the conventions for drafting effective process instructions.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. This course taught me the conventions for drafting effective formal proposals.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. This course taught me to recognize the demands that particular audiences place on written communication.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

9. This course taught me to use electronic resources to support library research.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. This course helped me to generate a set of principles that will guide their sense of effective writing practices.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. This course taught me to practice academic integrity and ethical communicative aims.
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B: INSTRUCTOR EXIT SURVEY

Please read the following items carefully and rate your agreement with each statement. To indicate your agreement, circle the appropriate number on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. This student learned to analyze rhetorical situations, particularly those common to technical fields.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

2. This student learned to identify authoritative sources in my discipline.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

3. This student learned the conventions for drafting effective memos.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

4. This student learned the conventions for drafting effective business letters.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

5. This student learned the conventions for drafting effective extended definitions.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

6. This student learned the conventions for drafting effective process instructions.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

7. This student learned the conventions for drafting effective formal proposals.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

8. This student learned to recognize the demands that particular audiences place on written communication.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

9. This student learned to use electronic resources to support library research.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

10. This student learned to generate a set of principles that will guide their sense of effective writing practices.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

11. This student learned to practice academic integrity and ethical communicative aims.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree