

# ENGLISH, SPEECH, & THEATRE DEPARTMENT

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## Unit-Level Assessment Liaison Report

Spring 2016

Liaison Project Start Date (Semester/Year): Spring 2016

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### Department Buy-In and Outcome Definition

To better understand how English 102 faculty assess research writing in their classes, what aspects of the paper they value quantitatively and qualitatively, I embarked upon a study focused on the assessment methods for English 102 final papers.

The project began by requesting sample rubrics used to assess the final research argument from current and recent-past instructors of English 102. Some instructors use the department rubric, some use an alternative rubric they've developed, and some use both in combination, while a fourth category involves instructors who use a more qualitative tool such as a checklist, table, or bulleted list. The categories and subcategories that faculty assign, as well as point or percentage value when applicable, are being collected with this data. An introductory email was sent to all English faculty, requesting sample rubrics from 102 instructors. Subsequent activity included additional follow up emails, face to face requests and clarification, chair and department-level brief reports/updates, and a visit from the Unit Level Coordinator at our April department meeting.

### Assessment Research and Design

The project changed, as most of the independent materials submitted did not include specific points or percentages correlated to specific categories. Instead of focusing on the number of points or percentages assigned to each category of the rubric, I calculated the number of times an item appeared on a rubric representing points, a percentage, a requirement, or a pass/fail element. The rubric items and categories were compared both against themselves (the number of rubrics that required that item) and with the Departmental Rubric. These items were also evaluated to determine how they aligned with the Student Learning Outcomes for English 102 (Appendix A).

### Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes

This assessment involved collecting data from faculty rubrics; therefore, a pilot assessment was not included.

#### Administer Specific Assessment

Rubrics were collected up until Week 11. Nine rubrics were collected; in addition, seven faculty replied that they use the departmental rubric. (Of those seven, two did not realize we could supplement with an independent rubric, two mentioned that they have been planning to write a supplement or independent rubric but haven't yet, one reported satisfaction with the departmental rubric, and two use both the departmental and a supplemental rubric.)

#### Data Analysis

As the table below (Appendix B) indicates, the majority of the independent rubrics included the presence and strength of a thesis statement as a requirement. This was followed by components including paragraph structure, correctly formatted in-text citations and Works Cited page, the presence of synthesis and analysis of source material (rather than merely reporting), demonstration of critical thought, and clear support for the thesis within claims and evidence chosen for inclusion in the paper. The overall structure of the essay (an effective outline), the presence of relevant support via examples and evidence from source material, the effectiveness of transitions, and the quality of source materials (generally primary academic or peer-reviewed sources) were also mentioned in many independent rubrics.

The Departmental Rubric is divided into six sections: Analytic Writing, Research Skills, Documentation, Critical Reading, Correct English, and Manuscript Form. Of these categories, two (Critical Reading and Manuscript Form) were not included on the independent rubrics.

The category encompassing mechanics and grammar makes up 20% of the current Departmental Rubric, but is underrepresented in independent rubrics. Anecdotally, many English 102 professors refuse to accept final papers with grammatical errors to an extent that suggests they are written below English 101 level; therefore, many more instructors may include this component as a factor in final grading, although it does not appear on all rubrics.

#### Supporting Evidence-Based Change (Use of Findings)

At a time when issues of plagiarism, attribution, critical reading, information literacy, and original thought are paramount in relation to the rise of the technological age, and considering the variety of programs and 4-year universities our students transfer into, it may be well advised to embark on a broader inquiry into whether our English 102 policies, SLO's, and practices still best prepare students for subsequent academic and professional endeavors. Collecting research paper and project instructions and/or rubrics from our

most frequent transfer schools may be advised before we re-address SLO's or departmental approaches to this course.

An even more thorough investigation into departmental rubrics and practices that incorporates many of the full time, long term faculty who primarily teach 3-4 sections of English 102 each semester could better portray our department. Although participation was voluntary and I am very grateful to those who participated, the data collected does not include many of the most prolific instructors of this course, and therefore, may not present a complete picture of our departmental practices.

#### Success Factors

Success factors included the high numbers of adjunct instructors who participated, responded, and engaged in conversation about the course requirements and rubrics; the number and scope of rubrics collected, for a first-semester project; and the correlation between some of the highest ranked rubric categories with the course SLOs and objectives.

#### Recommendations

Recommendations include a second call for additional rubrics in the fall to gather additional, more substantive, and therefore more accurate data in terms of drawing department-wide conclusions about how English 102 final papers are assessed. This could be done in conjunction with initial research beginning to be conducted at a sample of CCC career programs and four-year partner colleges and universities to determine what skills are, in fact, necessary for students who transfer.

## APPENDICES: ENGLISH, SPEECH, & THEATRE DEPARTMENT

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### Appendix A: Student Learning Outcomes for English 102

- A. Distinguish between reputable and non-reputable research sources
- B. Effectively use the library resources
- C. Think critically about works of literature, formulate his/her own views about texts, and clearly express those views both orally and in writing
- D. Write and effectively sustain a coherent argument of considerable length that blends original thought with support from both primary and secondary sources and is relatively free of mechanical and grammatical errors
- E. Write a research paper that correctly uses MLA format

### Appendix B: Rubric Components on Faculty Rubrics & Departmental Rubric

SLO Addressed	Component	Independent Rubrics	Department Rubric
D	Strength of thesis	11	x
D	Paragraph Structure	7	
E	Correct in-text citations	7	x
E	Correct Works Cited page	7	x
C	Synthesis/Analysis	7	
C	Critical Thought	7	
D	Reasons/Claims Support Thesis	7	x
D	Essay Structure	6	x
D	Support (examples/details is <i>present</i> )	6	
C	Effective Transitions	5	x
A, B	Quality of Sources	5	
D	Accuracy of word choice	4	x
D	Academic, formal language/style	4	
E	Correctly formatted quotations	4	
C	Balance of information vs. author's voice/analysis/ Discussion	4	
E	MLA Formatting (TNR, etc.)	4	
B	Minimum # of sources	3	
D	Correct paraphrase/ summary	2	x

<b>D</b>	Minimum 8 pages	2	
<b>D</b>	Counterargument is <i>present</i>	2	
<b>D</b>	Introduction and conclusion are <i>present</i>	1	
<b>D</b>	Solution is <i>present</i>	1	
	First person experiences are included as support	1	

***Additional categories included on the Departmental Rubric:***

**Critical Reading:**

1. Demonstrated the ability to identify logical fallacies.
2. Demonstrated the ability to identify inferences.
3. Demonstrated the ability to identify rhetorical techniques.
4. Demonstrated the ability to identify methods of reasoning.

**Manuscript Form:**

1. Formatted pages correctly<sup>1</sup>
2. Sectioned the parts of the research paper correctly<sup>2</sup>
3. Overall appearance of manuscript

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<sup>1</sup> Depending on interpretation, this could correspond to "Essay Structure," above

<sup>2</sup> Depending on interpretation, this could correspond to "MLA Formatting," above