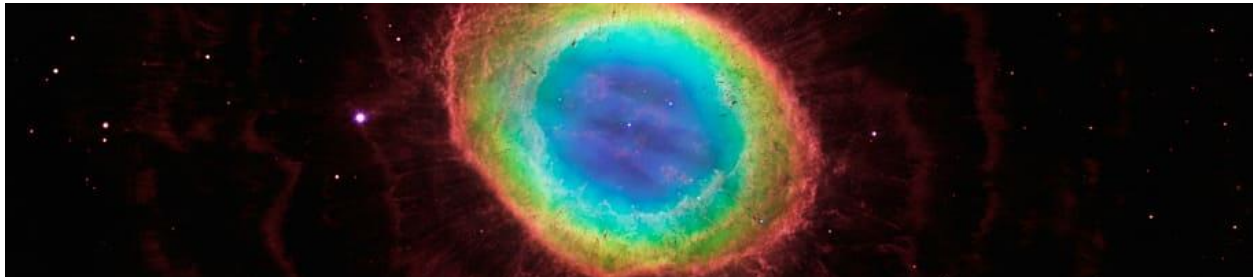


# Assessing Plagiarism:

## Unit assessment for the HWC English, Speech, Theater, & Journalism Department

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# Introduction

Three unit liaisons have held positions in the English, Speech, Theater, and Journalism department over the past two years. This report encompasses the second semester of the 2020-2021 academic year, in which a new liaison began a new project.

## Fall 2020

Professor Al-Amin continued her work on assessing the outcomes of the English 102 final paper in the context of prior coursework at HWC. She moved into the role of Institutional Assessment Coordinator in Spring 2021.

## Spring 2021

Amy Rosenquist took the role of Unit Level liaison and designed a tool to measure just one aspect of the English 102 outcomes: student understanding of what constitutes plagiarism.

# Department buy-in and outcome definition


Unit-level work had focused on the entirety of the English 102 paper for several semesters, both as it related to mastery of the course SLOs and in relation to at what level of English composition a student who successfully completed English 102 had originally placed. It proved challenging to obtain student samples from faculty, as well as to collect their finished departmental rubrics in order to gather data; this was not due to resistance so much as the reality of adding an additional data collection task at the end of a semester for English 102 instructors.

In contemplating a revised outcome, the SLOs for English 102 (and to an extent, the entire composition sequence) were reviewed in terms of the most vital knowledge students should possess upon graduation and transfer. The decision was made to assess student understanding and knowledge of plagiarism, since it is an important outcome in English 102 but also a vital distinction for students to take with them as they transfer to 4-year institutions.

Department faculty were engaged in initial drafts of a possible tool, with helpful feedback from both English composition and Speech faculty. A second draft of one particular question for the tool was again sent to department faculty for feedback and collaboration, which resulted again in a great deal of useful feedback. Department buy-in was again sought with the rollout of the pilot survey, which was sent to 20 instructors. It is hoped that their students will be encouraged to participate.

# Assessment research and design

During the research stage, numerous plagiarism tutorials, quizzes, web pages, and handbooks were consulted. Attention was paid to the specific focus within the larger topic



of plagiarism, wording of questions on quizzes and tutorials, scope, and the potential effectiveness of student writing samples vs. multiple choice questions.

An initial tool was designed with several multiple choice and true/false questions. After receiving faculty feedback as well as sharing with the full Assessment Committee in the context of a unit-level liaison report, significant revision was undertaken. The number of multiple choice questions was reduced, true/false questions were eliminated, and student writing samples with evidence of plagiarism were added.

Faculty feedback was again sought and generously provided on the revisions. The tool was finalized during Week 12, and shared with instructors in Week 13. The rationale for the timing of the pilot being so late in the semester is that ideally, students will have been more likely to have learned about and/or practiced techniques to write with integrity toward the end of their semester.

## Pilot assessment tools and processes

The assessment tool (Appendix) currently consists of an opening statement and consent, ID collection, four multiple choice questions, and two student writing samples.

Twenty instructors were selected to administer the pilot. It is hoped that 25-50% of these instructors share it with their classes. The decision was made to include all levels of English composition (96, 101/97, 101, 102). Information regarding differences in understanding plagiarism across groups of students who have successfully completed each level of composition will be valuable, particularly as it relates to those students who are currently enrolled in or have completed English 102.

Depending on the results of the pilot and in consultation with Assessment Committee and ESTJ Department members, the tool may be administered across the entire department in the fall, including not only English Composition but also currently enrolled journalism, speech, and literature students.

## Data analysis

Data is being collected at the time of this report. Sixty-five students have completed the pilot. Although it is too early to comment on the full spectrum of the data, there is a general understanding of some of the more blatant acts of plagiarism (buying a paper, copy/pasting from sources) and less of a consensus on more subtle plagiarism (synonym substitution, re-using work).

When the full assessment is conducted in the fall, assistance from the Data Analyst will be key in helping to sort out various levels and nuances of the results.



# Supporting Evidence-Based Change

With the pilot in progress, evidence has not yet accumulated to the point of determining what change(s) might be best recommended. However, in terms of the tool itself, the pilot is providing useful information about potential changes to the assessment for fall as well as a snapshot of potential student trends in conceptualizing and understanding plagiarism on a small scale.

## Program assessment update in discipline

The English, Speech, Theater, and Journalism department does not have a program.

## Conclusion

The pilot assessment has been successful to date in terms of obtaining a small sample of student responses from which to form preliminary conclusions about revisions to the fall pilot. Specifically, it will be important to discuss the results of the question that includes a student writing sample - which demonstrates overt plagiarism, but to date has not been identified as such by a majority of respondents - with department and Assessment Committee members at the start of the fall semester, before administering the pilot. It may also be advisable to separate the tool into different surveys so that students who are currently enrolled in various levels of English are more easily distinguishable, while keeping the exact same questions.

Plagiarism is often an issue related to lack of knowledge rather than intentional deceit. This tool will provide current data as a foundation on which to continue to build awareness leading to greater integrity in our students' academic work.

## Appendix-- [Fall 2021 Plagiarism Pilot Assessment](#)