University Writing Project Group Results

The University Writing Project (UWP) is administered each spring by the Office of Assessment Services (OAS). The results of the 2011 UWP based on individual papers are reported in a separate report. In addition to the individual writing samples that were collected for the UWP in 2011, the OAS accepted group writing samples to enable the participation of more instructors. Group samples were received from 5 instructors who taught 7 separate courses, for a total of 44 group papers. The protocol for sample collection, scoring, and analysis was the same for the group samples as it was for the individual samples of the 2011 University Writing Project. The completed writing samples were transferred to the scoring coordinator from the Department of English and were evaluated according to a standardized assessment rubric developed by the department (see Appendix A). Two independent scorers evaluated each writing sample and their combined scores were then entered into an Excel file for transmission to the OAS. Scores could thus range from 2 to 6; with scores of 2, 4, and 6 indicating the writing ‘did not meet’, ‘met’, or ‘exceeded’ expectations, respectively. A total of 75 groups participated in this year’s University Writing Project. Groups ranged in size from 2 to 5 students.

Results

Descriptive statistics examining both combined and course-level group-paper performance on the 2011 University Writing Project were conducted. A frequency distribution depicting combined group-paper scores can be found in Figure 1. The mean score for all combined group-papers was 4.75 with a standard deviation of .967. A score of 4 or better, indicating writing expectations were met, was achieved by 95.5 percent of the groups who participated. The mean score was also calculated at the course-level (see Figure 2). Course-level frequency distributions can be found in Appendix B.

![Figure 1: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores](image)

Note. N = 44. Mean = 4.75. Std Dev. = .967
The General Writing Rubric allows for subscale distinctions to determine areas of strength and weakness within the writing samples. Seven subscales are identified: focus, genre, audience, organization, critical thinking, writer’s presence, and presentation. Subscale explanations are as follows: Focus: The writing demonstrates adequate understanding of the writer’s task and establishes effective communicative intent. Genre: The writing demonstrates satisfactory control of the conventions of the relevant discourse community. Audience: The writing reflects consistent awareness of desired impact on audience and effectively appeals to audience expectations. Organization: The writing demonstrates appropriate arrangement of material and provides sufficient material to satisfy expectations of readers. Critical Thinking: The writing reflects adequate development, representation, and/or integration of ideas, experiences, or texts. Writer’s Presence: The writing suggests an informed writer who establishes and maintains an appropriate voice, tone, and style. Presentation: The writing shows control of sentence-level features of written language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage). The mean subscale scores for the entire sample are presented in Figure 3 and the course-level mean subscale scores are in Appendix C.
Based on the subscale analyses (Figure 3), all subscales except ‘presentation’ met the level of expectancy (i.e., a score of 4 or more) at the combined group level. Scores on the presentation subscale were below expected writing standards. Presentation is represented by basic features of written language such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage. The section-level data can be found in Appendix C. Some sections appeared to perform better than others. These data can help inform areas for improvement in course writing projects.

**Discussion**

As with the 2011 University Writing Project which analyzed individual student papers, the group writing project sampled course-embedded writing assignments. Writing assignments were collected from 44 groups of students enrolled in seven NIU courses. A team of trained scorers from the Department of English evaluated the writing assignments with a General Writing Rubric identical to the rubric used for the individual writing samples in the UWP.

Descriptive statistics revealed a trend similar to that of the UWP results. The presentation subscale was again the lowest of the seven subscales.

A call for participation in the 2012 University Writing Project has been issued by the OAS. The same standardized rubric will be used again in 2012.
APPENDIX A: Department of English General Writing Rubric

The following criteria describe writing that **Meets expectations:**

**Focus:**
The writing demonstrates adequate understanding of the writer’s task and establishes effective communicative intent.

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**Genre:**
The writing demonstrates satisfactory control of the conventions of the relevant discourse community.

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**Audience:**
The writing reflects consistent awareness of desired impact on audience and effectively appeals to audience expectations.

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**Organization:**
The writing demonstrates appropriate arrangement of material and provides sufficient material to satisfy expectations of readers.

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**Critical Thinking:**
The writing reflects adequate development, representation, and/or integration of ideas, experiences, or texts.

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**Writer’s Presence:**
The writing suggests an informed writer who establishes and maintains an appropriate voice, tone, and style.

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**Presentation:**
The writing shows control of sentence-level features of written language (grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage).

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APPENDIX B: Course-Level Frequencies of 2011 University Writing Project Group Scores

TECH 420: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

![Histogram for TECH 420]

Mean = 5.25
Std. Dev. = 1.035
N = 8

TECH 478: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

![Histogram for TECH 478]

Mean = 5
Std. Dev. = 0.894
N = 6
TECH 477: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

![Bar chart showing frequency distribution of scores for TECH 477]

Mean = 5.17
Std. Dev. = 0.983
N = 6

ISYE 431: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

![Bar chart showing frequency distribution of scores for ISYE 431]

Mean = 4
Std. Dev. = 0.5
N = 9
ISYE 440: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 5.29
Std. Dev. = 0.756
N = 7

ELE 491: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4
Std. Dev. = 0
N = 4
APPENDIX B

ELE 492: Frequency of 2011 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.25
Std. Dev. = 1.258
N = 4
APPENDIX C: Course-Level Mean Subscale Scores

TECH 420 Group-paper Subscale Scores (N=8)

TECH 477 Group-paper Subscale Scores (N=6)
APPENDIX C

TECH 478 Group-paper Subscale Scores (N=6)

ISYE 440 Group-paper Subscale Scores (N=7)