History of the Writing Project

Northern Illinois University has had a long history of interest in the writing abilities of its students. From writing samples used to place students appropriately in their first college-level English courses, to the external review of dissertations, the university invests a significant amount of time and resources into the process of analyzing student writing. A number of current college committees have a direct interest in student writing abilities as well; among these are the University Assessment Panel (UAP), the General Education Committee (GEC), and the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee (WACC).

Junior-Level Writing Project (1999 through 2004)

One project that was established specifically to measure student writing ability was the Junior-Level Writing Project. The project began formally in 1999, and was first administered using a writing assessment tool developed by American College Testing (ACT). In 2000, the group of faculty and administration spearheading the project made the decision to administer future iterations of the project using an institutionally developed prompt rather than the generic prompt supplied in the standardized instrument. The prevailing thought was that students would prepare a better writing sample if the prompt had a universal theme that could evoke an invested personal response. The topic selected involved participants’ reasons for choosing their college major/degree. That prompt, with only minor modification/clarification was used until 2004.

The Junior-Level Writing Project was administered annually in the spring semester. Faculty volunteers were solicited by means of a call letter. Those agreeing to take part in the assessment were required to designate one 50-minute class period in which the assessment would be conducted. During that class session, materials were distributed, the prompt was read, and students were instructed to write for the remainder of the period. At the end of the session, materials were collected and returned to the university’s assessment coordinator. The writing samples were scored by personnel from the Department of English who were selected and trained by a scoring coordinator also from English. Scorers were given copies of the students’ writing samples with names, majors, and other pertinent information removed, which they scored using a standardized rubric. Each sample was read by two scorers; any discrepancies were resolved by a third reader. The quantitative scores were then collected and populated in a spreadsheet which was later transferred to the Office of Assessment Services (OAS), and score reports were issued, along with letters of score explanation, directly to the students. The scoring coordinator from the Department of English also evaluated the writing samples qualitatively; data were summarized in a series of written documents detailing common qualities and circumstances, as well as trends in writing content by major. When all of the information was received, the assessment coordinator produced a summary document to distribute to participating faculty and college and university administration.

In the first years of the Junior-Level Writing Project, faculty (and therefore student) participation was high. The results of these assessments consistently showed that students demonstrated a range of writing skills, with an average slightly below the desired criterion of 8 on a 12-point scale. Over the course of the project however, participation fell dramatically. In 2002, when the initial call letter was sent to faculty soliciting participation, there was a response rate of 0 percent. The OAS immediately began a calling campaign soliciting volunteers. The most common reasons given for non-participation in this project were the use of a class period for administering the assessment, and a lack of student engagement in the assignment. Based on this information, internal discussion of
alternative methods to assess writing skills and abilities began. By spring 2003, the Junior-Level Writing Project was offered only as a special administration to the College of Business, and was no longer offered campus-wide.

**University Writing Project: College of Business Pilot (2004 through 2006)**

As a result of on-going discussions and a search of the literature, it became evident that a redesign of the Junior-Level Writing Project was needed. The interest in students’ writing abilities was still present university-wide, but the need for more focused writing became evident. The ever present assessment question “What can the student DO?” became the central issue and was translated into the question of “Can NIU students write effectively and at the required level of proficiency for the positions they will obtain after graduation?” As the call for assessment at both state and federal levels continues to increase, this question has taken on greater meaning.

The Junior-Level Writing Project was redesigned into the University Writing Project which was piloted in spring 2004 and spring 2006. Working with faculty in the College of Business, the OAS engaged in a course-embedded writing assessment involving the review of required course assignments rather than a standardized writing prompt. The rationale for this pilot was rooted in the need to determine students’ ability to write effectively and proficiently in their majors. When students are engaged in course required writing projects for their major, they are more focused because their grades depend on the quality of the work they produce. Students’ ability to synthesize, express, and accurately apply the content they have learned in their courses has a direct relationship to their ability to produce and work in their field post-graduation. Hence, the students should be more engaged in the assessment. In addition, there is no need for faculty to dedicate a class period for the assessment because they are submitting pre-existing course-embedded assignments.

Therefore, the revised assessment process addresses both student engagement and class time concerns previously raised by faculty.

The following protocol was followed for the revised assessment process piloted in spring 2004 and spring 2006:

1) Writing samples to be scored were obtained from courses in the major (junior-level or above). The course instructors selected the writing sample to be scored.

2) Writing samples were obtained from work already required in the selected course; no new assignments were required.

3) As the writing sample came from course-embedded work, there was no need to use a class period for project administration.

4) Writing samples were collected from the selected course instructor; two copies were made and the originals were returned directly to the instructor by the participating department/college. There was no maximum number of pages for any one writing sample; a minimum of three pages of text was required. Copied results were transferred to the OAS; the course and college of origin were clearly identified by cover sheet on each set of samples. All returned writing samples continued to be used as a part of the course requirements/assignments.
5) Obtained samples were cleaned of identifying information by the OAS, and scored (as before) by trained scorers selected from the Department of English. Coordination of the training and scoring process was done by faculty selected from the Department of English. The existing assessment rubric (utilized for the Junior-Level Writing Project) continued to be used. Scores obtained from the quantitative scoring process were entered in a spreadsheet, and results were transferred to the OAS for analysis. The qualitative review of writing samples was discontinued.

6) Results were tabulated by department and college in aggregate format. No distribution of scoring was made to participating students, but students were made aware of their individual scores and provided with a certificate for their participation.

7) The departmental writing samples were solicited during the months of April/May, and were turned over to the scoring unit in late May. Results from the scoring process were completed and submitted to the OAS by July of 2004 and 2006.

8) The final report of the pilot project was completed each year in the fall, with presentation of the report to the participating colleges and the Department of English. The final report was also made available to the UAP and other NIU bodies as needed.

Campus-Wide University Writing Project (2007 and beyond)

After reviewing the results of the College of Business pilots of the University Writing Project, the General Education Committee decided that it would be beneficial to expand the project to the full NIU campus. The OAS expanded the 2007 University Writing Project to the whole campus with particular emphasis in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Health and Human Sciences, and Engineering and Engineering Technology. These colleges were contacted concerning plans for the 2007 University Writing Project in the fall of 2006. It was determined that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences would be recruited from each year and that recruitment from other colleges that administer undergraduate degree programs would rotate from year-to-year. Thus, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, along with two or three of the other five colleges, would be recruited for the University Writing Project each year.

The same protocol that was followed for the College of Business Pilot was also followed for spring 2007. In the Spring of 2008, again the same protocol was followed with the exception of distributing individual scores and certificates-of-participation to students. It was determined that informing students of their University Writing Project scores caused unnecessary concern over discrepancies in said scores and the grades the students were given by instructors.

Rubric Redesign

In the fall of 2007, The Department of English created a revised writing rubric with the intent of addressing writing styles more comprehensively. The revised rubric contained seven subscales to evaluate various writing styles more effectively and to identify areas of strength and weakness in student writing at the university, college, and course levels. The rubric was approved by faculty and administration within departments with more technical writing styles such as business, engineering, and math. The revised rubric was first implemented in the 2008 University Writing project (see Rubric on following page).
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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</table>

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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</table>

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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**Critical Thinking:**  
The writing reflects adequate development, representation, and/or integration of ideas, experiences, or texts.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
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</table>

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Meets expectations</td>
<td>Doesn’t meet expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2010 University Writing Project: College-Level Writing Ability/Skills Analysis

Method

Recruitment for the 2010 University Writing Project was campus-wide with particular emphasis on the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Education, Visual and Performing Arts and Business. These colleges were contacted concerning plans for the 2010 University Writing Project beginning in the fall of 2009. A total of 20 faculty and 518 students participated.

Writing Sample Collection and Scoring Process

The protocol for the 2010 University Writing Project was similar to the revised assessment process used in the College of Business Pilot (see above) with a few changes to facilitate streamlining. The final protocol for the 2010 University Writing project was as follows:

Writing samples were solicited from junior-level and above courses within various majors during the end of fall 2009 and beginning of spring 2010 semesters.

1) Course instructors selected the course-embedded writing samples to submit and be scored. The maximum number of pages for any one writing sample is ten pages; a minimum of three pages of text is required.

2) Since the writing samples were already required for the course, no new assignments were required and no class periods were used for the project.

3) At the end of the semester for which an instructor agreed to participate (fall 2009 or spring 2010), writing samples were collected electronically or hard copy. Electronic copies were collected through email and CD-ROM. When hard copies were collected, instructors generally collected two paper copies from students (one copy the instructor kept for course grading and one copy the instructor submitted for the University Writing Project, usually via campus mail).

4) Writing samples were cleaned of identifying information by the OAS. ‘Cleaning’ removed student name, z-ID, course, instructor, and any comments from instructor scoring. Writing samples were given a code number for future referencing.

5) Writing samples were transferred to the scoring coordinator from the Department of English and scored by trained scorers. The Department of English General Writing Rubric, redesigned in 2007, was used for a third year. Two independent scorers evaluated each paper, providing each paper with two scores (1-3). Scores obtained from this quantitative scoring process were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and transferred to the OAS for analysis in July 2010.
**Analysis**

During the scoring process, two independent scorers evaluated each paper, providing each paper with two scores (1 to 3, based on the scoring rubric) for each of the seven subscales: focus, genre, audience, organization, critical thinking, writer’s presence, and presentation. The two scores were summed for each subscale, which provided each paper with seven subscale scores, and one computed average score, between 2 and 6. Scores of 2, 4, and 6 indicated the writing ‘did not meet,’ ‘met,’ or ‘exceeded’ expectations, respectively. Results were analyzed by course, department, college, and entire sample.

Additional data were gathered from Registration and Records in the spring of 2010 in order to determine whether cumulative grade point average (GPA), Spring 2010 term GPA, ACT composite score (ACT), ACT English score (ACT English), and most recent English course grade predicted student performance on the University Writing Project. Data regarding attendance to the University Writing Center were also collected and analyzed. University Writing Center data were used to determine if Writing Center attendance predicted students’ University Writing Project scores, and if group differences existed between those who attended and those who did not attend the University Writing Center.
Results

Descriptive statistics examining students’ overall and subscale performance on the 2010 University Writing Project at the university, college, and course levels were computed. A frequency distribution graphing students’ overall performance on the 2010 University Writing Project can be found in Figure 1. Combined scores from the two raters could range from 2 to 6; with scores of 2, 4, and 6 indicating the writing ‘did not meet,’ ‘met,’ or ‘exceeded’ expectations, respectively. The mean score for all students (N = 518) was 4.13 with a standard deviation of .889. A score of 4 or better, indicating writing expectations were met, was achieved by approximately 80 percent of the students who participated. Figures displaying frequency distributions separately by college and course levels can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.


The mean score was also calculated for each of the colleges (see Figure 2) and courses (see Appendix C). Students in the College of Business had a mean score of 4.29 (N = 24) with a standard deviation of .751. A score of 4 or better, indicating writing expectations were met, was achieved by 88 percent of the students who participated from this college. The College of Health & Human Sciences had a mean score of 4.00 (N = 56) with a standard deviation of .661. Eighty-six percent of the students from the College of Health & Human Sciences achieved a score of 4 or better. The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences had a mean score of 4.09 (N = 348) with a standard deviation of .957. Seventy-seven percent of these students achieved a score of 4 or better. The College of Visual & Performing Arts had a mean score of 4.50 (N = 10) and standard deviation of .850. A score of 4 or better was met by 90 percent of the students in the College of Visual & Performing Arts. The College of Education had a mean score of 4.25 (N = 80) and standard deviation of .738. A score of 4 or better was met by 88 percent of the students in the College of Education.
The University Writing Project 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. Expanded explanations of each subscale can be found in the Methods section of this report. The mean score for each subscale was calculated at the university (see Figure 3), college (see Figure 4), and course levels (see Appendix D). Subscale score distributions by college can be viewed in Appendix E.

Note. N = 518.
**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).
Based on the university-level subscale analyses (see Figure 3), all subscales except Presentation met the level of expectancy (i.e., a score of 4 or more). 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. At the college-level (see Figure 4), Presentation was similarly low, as it was not met in three out of the five participating colleges. The Focus and Writer’s Presence subscales tended to be the highest, as they met expectations in all five colleges. All of this data is relatively consistent with previous years. The course-level data can be found in Appendix D. These data can be used to inform future writing assignments within individual courses. For example, if a course scored particularly low in Presentation or Critical Thinking, course assignments could be adapted to put additional emphasis on such areas of writing.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using SPSS to determine if the mean scores in any of the colleges were significantly different from one another. Results showed that the colleges did not significantly differ, $F(4, 512) = 1.432$, $p = .222$, with mean writing project scores ranging from 4.00 to 4.50.

Using data collected from Registration and Records, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether Spring 2010 term GPA, ACT English score (ACT English), and number of University Writing Center Attendances predicted students’ performance on the University Writing Project. Data regarding the number of University Writing Center attendances were gathered for the 2004-2005 through 2009-2010 academic years. Since University Writing Center attendance is sometimes required by lower-level English courses, and we were interested in students who voluntarily attended the University Writing Center (rather than those who attended as a course requirement), only attendance data from the past two years (2008-2009 and 2009-2010) were analyzed. Two hundred seventy-eight participants, of the total 518 University Writing Project sample, had scores for the set of predictors and were thus included in the regression analyses. Last year, Spring term GPA, ACT English score, and University Writing Center attendance were found to predict University Writing Project scores and it was hypothesized that similar results may be found this year.

The omnibus test of the multiple regression model was significant, $F(3, 275) = 12.806$, $p = .000$, but only two of three individual predictors were significant. Table 1 shows the results for each predictor in the model. Spring 2010 term GPA significantly predicted UWP scores, as did ACT English scores. This is consistent with the 2009 University Writing Project results. The parameter estimate for University Writing Center attendance was negative. While this is consistent with results from last year, Writing Center attendance did not significantly predict UWP scores as it had in 2009. The current model accounted for approximately eleven percent of the variance in UWP scores, as indicated by the adjusted R square value of .113. The standardized regression coefficients, or Beta values, offer an ordered representation of each predictor’s contribution to the model. As seen in Table 1, Beta values for the two significant predictors are very similar, indicating that Spring 2010 term GPA and ACT English accounted for approximately the same amount of variance in scores. These results suggest that higher Spring 2010 term GPA and ACT English scores predict higher scores on the University Writing Project.
Table 1

Predictors in Regression Model Predicting University Writing Project Scores (N=278)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2010 term GPA</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>4.092*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT English</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>3.874*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Attendance</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>-0.649</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adj. R² = .113, Model contains significant constant term, *p<.001.

Additional analysis of the UWP subscale scores was conducted using the data collected on the number of University Writing Center Attendances. Attendance data was aggregated to form a dichotomous indicator of University Writing Center Attendance and an independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if group differences existed between participants who attended versus participants who did not attend the University Writing Center. The t-test consisted of the seven University Writing Project subscale scores as test variables, and University Writing Center Attendance as the grouping variable. Correction for multiple comparisons was taken into account to keep α, the probability of making a Type I error, at a level of .05. The t-test revealed no significant differences between those who attended the University Writing Center and those who did not for any of the seven subscale scores.

Discussion

This is the fourth year the University Writing Project has sampled course-embedded writing assignments from the full NIU campus and the third year that the streamlined University Writing Project Rubric (which includes subscales) was used. As in the past, a team of trained scorers from the Department of English were enlisted to evaluate the 518 student writings using the streamlined rubric.

The results of the 2010 University Writing Project assessment indicate that although most students are demonstrating a writing ability at the designated standard, some still are not, and there is still room for improvement in students’ writing abilities. Specifically, improvement in writing ability needs strengthening in the area of writing presentation (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation, and word usage), as three of the five colleges failed to meet expectations in presentation. The average scores across the university on the remaining six subscales (Focus, Genre, Audience, Organization, Critical Thinking, and Writer’s Presence) all met expectations, though none of the subscales exceeded expectations. These results suggest there is room for progress in all subscale areas.

1 It is important to note that there is great variability in subscores across the five colleges. Thus, any conclusion drawn from these results must be tempered with the caveat that the college samples were not randomly selected and, in some cases, may be too small to draw any sound conclusions. Nevertheless, the data point to areas of potential writing challenges for students that colleges may wish to explore further.
For the third year, the course-level subscale data strengthened our understanding of NIU student writing. It is the course-level data that can help modify, shape, and improve student learning at NIU. In essence, examining the strengths and weaknesses of students’ writing in an individual course can inform future writing assignments within that course, closing the assessment loop by using data to guide practice (see Appendix D). Thus, it is the hope that the University Writing Project will inform educators within specific departments (or colleges) of areas where course assignments can be adapted to promote higher writing expectations. As an example, a course where students scored particularly low in ‘organization,’ ‘critical thinking,’ and ‘presentation’ could require future papers to (1) be organized in an outline-fashion with headings - or - include an introduction, body, and conclusion, (2) include the student’s own reflection of the course material - or - integrate course material into his/her own ideas and experiences, and (3) be free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, specifying that such errors will decrease the student’s paper grade.

Data from Registration and Records and the University Writing Center were used to determine whether Spring 2010 term GPA, ACT English score, and number of University Writing Center attendances predicted student performance on the University Writing Project. The decision to use this model for the multiple regression analysis was based in part on results from University Writing Project analyses from previous years. This year, the regression analysis showed that Spring 2010 GPA and ACT English scores significantly predicted UWP scores, but attendance at the University Writing Center did not. These results indicate that higher scores on the ACT English component and higher grade point averages in the Spring term are predictive of higher UWP scores for this sample. It is often difficult to make inferences from a single, non-random sample, and random assignment is very difficult to achieve in this context. However, looking at multiple rounds of a study over the course of several years provides a stronger argument in favor of the results if similar results are found from year to year. These results are consistent with results from the 2009 University Writing project. Therefore, it is a reasonable inference that Spring GPA and ACT English scores are significant predictors of University Writing Project scores, indicating a strong tie between academic performance and writing abilities. However, the R square for this model indicated that only 11 percent of the variance in UWP scores was accounted for by these two predictors. There is still a large portion of the variance in those scores not accounted for. This provides an opportunity for future analyses to see if there are other variables that may account for some of the unknown variance.

As a final note, it is important that the results from the 2010 University Writing Project be examined, considered, and integrated into future writing assignments across the NIU campus. We encourage educators to adapt course assignments based on the UWP results and to raise writing expectations in subscale areas that students’ abilities are lacking. For suggestions on how to utilize any data presented within this report, feel free to contact the Office of Assessment Services.

A call for participation in the 2011 University Writing Project will be issued by the OAS in Fall 2010. In an effort to further increase participation in the University Writing Project by faculty and students across campus, the call for participation will be posted in NIU Today and on the OAS website. Direct calls will be made to faculty members across campus to increase involvement in the upcoming assessment. In keeping with the assessment cycle, greater emphasis will be placed on recruiting participation from the Colleges of Engineering and Engineering Technology along with the College of Health and Human Sciences in Spring 2011.
APPENDIX A: College-Level Frequencies of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

College of Business
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

College of Education
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores
College of Health & Human Sciences
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores
College of Visual & Performing Arts
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.5
Std. Dev. = 0.85
N = 10
APPENDIX B: Course-Level Frequencies of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

**AHLS 344**
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 3.93
Std. Dev. = 0.704
N = 29

**ANTH 313**
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 4.09
Std. Dev. = 0.944
N = 11
**ANTH 361**

Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

- [Histogram with data points: 2 instances at score 4, 1 instance at score 6.]
- Mean: 4.67
- Std. Dev.: 1.155
- N: 3

**ANTH 414**

Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

- [Histogram with data points: 1 instance at score 2, 2 instances at score 4, 6 instances at score 6.]
- Mean: 4.44
- Std. Dev.: 1.014
- N: 9
ANTH 417
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.33
Std. Dev. = 0.516
N = 8

COMD 221F
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4
Std. Dev. = 0.707
N = 17
COMD 221 SP
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

ENGL 332
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores
ENGL 470
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.2
Std. Dev. = 1.056
N = 20

GEOG 303
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Cumulative Paper Score

Frequency

Mean = 4.08
Std. Dev. = 0.806
N = 36
GEOG 332
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

MATH 360
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores
MGMT 468
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 4.29
Std. Dev. = 0.751
N = 24

NURS 301
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean = 4.07
Std. Dev. = 0.616
N = 27
POLS 350
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

![Bar Chart for POLS 350](image)

Mean = 4.05
Std. Dev. = 1.056
N = 18

POLS 352
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

![Bar Chart for POLS 352](image)

Mean = 4.5
Std. Dev. = 0.76
N = 14
POL 360
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.27
Std. Dev. = 0.883
N = 22

THD 474
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.5
Std. Dev. = 0.85
N = 10
TLCI 300
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.67
Std. Dev. = 0.577
N = 3

TLEC 403
Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.16
Std. Dev. = 0.789
N = 38
TLSE 420

Frequency of 2010 University Writing Project Scores

Mean = 4.31
Std. Dev. = 0.694
N = 39
APPENDIX C: Mean Course-Level University Writing Project Scores

Mean 2010 University Writing Project Scores by Course
APPENDIX D: Mean 2010 UWP Subscales Scores by Course, Organized by College

Business

![Bar chart showing mean subscales scores for Business MGMT 468 (N=24).]

Education

![Bar chart showing mean subscales scores for Education TLC 300 (N=3) and TLEC 403 (N=38).]
Education (continued)

![Chart showing mean subscale scores for TLSE 420 (N=39).]

Health & Human Sciences

![Chart showing mean subscale scores for AHLS 344 (N=29) and NURS 301 (N=27).]
Liberal Arts & Sciences

APPENDIX D

Mean Subscale Score

Exceeds

Meets

Doesn’t Meet

ANTH 313 (N=11)

ANTH 361 (N=3)

Focus

Audience

Critical Thinking

Presentation

Genre

Organization

Writer's Presence

ANTH 414 (N=9)

ANTH 417 (N=6)
Liberal Arts & Sciences (continued)

[Bar charts showing comparisons across different courses in terms of mean subscale scores.]

Legend:
- Focus
- Audience
- Critical Thinking
- Genre
- Organization
- Writer's Presence
- Presentation
Liberal Arts & Sciences (Continued)

![Bar chart showing mean subscale scores for MATH 360 (N=45) and POLS 350 (N=18).]

- **Focus**
- **Audience**
- **Genre**
- **Organization**
- **Writer's Presence**

- **Doesn't Meet**
- **Meets**
- **Exceeds**

![Bar chart showing mean subscale scores for POLS 352 (N=14) and POLS 360 (N=22).]
Visual & Performing Art

![Chart showing mean subscale scores for THD 474 (N=10) with categories Focus, Audience, Critical Thinking, Organization, and Writer's Presence.]
APPENDIX E: Subscale Score Distributions by College

College of Business

**Distribution of Scores by Subscale**

- **Focus**
- **Genre**
- **Audience**
- **Organization**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Writer's Presence**
- **Presentation**

**College of Business (N=24)**
College of Education

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

College of Education (N=80)
College of Health & Human Sciences

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>2 - Doesn't Meet</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 - Meets</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6 - Exceeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Genre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer's Presence</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

College of Health & Human Sciences (N=56)
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (N=348)
College of Visual & Performing Arts

Distribution of Scores by Subscale

- 2 - Doesn't Meet
- 3
- 4 - Meets
- 5
- 6 - Exceeds

% of total scores

Subscale

College of Visual & Performing Arts (N=10)
APPENDIX F: University Writing Project Guidelines

Introduction:
The University Writing Project (UWP) (formerly known as the Junior-Level Writing Project) was established in the mid-1990s to specifically measure the writing ability of NIU undergraduate students. The UWP has evolved into a course-embedded assessment of students’ written assignments. The Office of Assessment Services (OAS) invites faculty from across the campus to participate in the project each year by submitting completed course assignments to the OAS for review by faculty from the Department of English using a standardized assessment rubric.

Benefits of the UWP to Faculty and Students:
The benefits of the UWP are numerous:

1) Faculty members have ongoing input into the writing assessments. The course instructors who participate in the UWP will select the writing sample to be scored.

2) Faculty members are not asked to assign additional written coursework or give up valuable class time to participate in the UWP. Writing samples are obtained from work already required in the selected courses and, as the writing sample will come from course-embedded work, there will be no need to use a class period for project administration.

3) Faculty members will receive valuable feedback on the writing abilities of their students. Samples will be scored by trained scorers selected from the Department of English and results will be tabulated by department and college in aggregate format by the OAS. These data may be used for ongoing program assessment and will contribute to the assessment of general education at NIU.

Faculty Participation:

Faculty choosing to participate in the UWP must agree to the following:

1. Faculty members will send a list of students’ names and Z-IDs for each participating course to the OAS by February 19, 2010. These will be kept confidential.

2. Faculty members will send the instructions for the course assignment selected to the OAS to be shared with the English faculty evaluating the writing assignments by February 19, 2010. The maximum number of pages for any one writing sample is ten pages; a minimum of three pages of text is required.

3. Faculty members will send the student writing samples to the OAS no later than May 3, 2010 (these may be sent electronically or by hard copy).

4. Faculty will inform their students that course assignments will be submitted to the OAS for institutional, college, and program assessment.

5. Faculty will inform their students that the results of their individual assessments will remain confidential by the OAS and will not be shared with faculty, college administrators, or any other parties. Aggregated results will be made publicly available.

For more information, please contact Carolinda Douglass in the Office of Assessment Services at 753-7120 or by email at cdoug@niu.edu