

## Writing Intensive Course Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Report Spring 2011

The WID/WAC Committee of the Academic Senate of Queensborough Community College coordinated an assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) in Writing Intensive courses during the Spring 2011 semester. The assessment included WI courses from six different departments: Art & Design; Business; Health, Physical Education, and Dance; Mechanical Engineering and Design Drafting; Nursing; and Speech, Communication, and Theater Arts.

To conduct the assessment the WID/WAC Committee, in consultation with Committee member and CATW certified instructor Jilani Warsi, agreed to use the new CATW (CUNY Assessment Test of Writing) rubric to assess student writing. Each WI course instructor chose two texts following the CATW guidelines: 250-300 words and 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. The students in each course assessed were given the same directions for completing the writing as given below:

### Writing Directions

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author's most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.

The assessment of writing took place once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end (the pre-test and post-test). While the instructor could have used the writing as a class assignment, the students' written work for the purposes of this study was assessed by CATW certified evaluators using the CATW rubric which is attached to this report.

When analyzing the Total Overall Score pre-test and post-test for each student in all seven sections of six different courses included in the study, 54 percent of the students exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 85 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 46 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 32 percent of students improved their scores by at least 12 percent.

The CATW rubric studies five distinct areas of student writing:

- Critical Response to Writing Task and the Text
- Development of Writer's Ideas
- Structure of the Responses
- Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice
- Language Use: Grammar, Usage, Mechanics

Students are scored between 1 and 6 on each element, 6 being the highest. The scores on the first three areas are double while the language elements are not. Hence, Language Use accounts for 25 percent of the total score. For a full discussion of the CATW test and scoring, please see the CATW Faculty Handbook.

<b>Writing Assessment Score Differentials Pre-test versus Post-test Percent of Students</b>						
Change	CATW Rubric Categories					Total Overall Score
	Critical Response to Writing Task and the Text	Development of Writer's Ideas	Structure of the Responses	Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice	Language Use: Grammar, Usage, Mechanics	
No change or increase in score	66	74	73	75	69	54
Decrease in score	34	26	27	25	31	46
<b>Increase of at least 25% in score</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32*</b>

\* On the Total Overall Score, 32 percent of students improved their scores by at least 12 percent.

The WI students' essay scores on the individual elements showed results similar to the overall scores as follows:

- When analyzing the “Critical Response to Writing Task and the Text” in pre-test and post-test scores for each student in all courses included in the study, 66 percent of the students exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 100 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 34 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 31 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent.
- When analyzing the “Development of Writer's Ideas” in pre-test and post-test scores for each student in all courses included in the study, 74 percent of the students exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 100 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 26 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 28 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent.
- When analyzing the “Structure of the Responses” in pre-test and post-test scores for each student in all courses included in the study, 73 percent of the students exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 100 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 27 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 18 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent.
- When analyzing the “Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice” in pre-test and post-test scores for each student in all courses included in the study, 75 percent of the students exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 100 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 25 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 23 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent.
- When analyzing the “Language Use: Grammar, Usage, Mechanics” in pre-test and post-test scores for each student in all courses included in the study, 69 percent of the students

exhibited an improvement ranging from zero to 100 percent on the post-test score over the pre-test score. Therefore, 31 percent of students' scores declined. Overall, 25 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent.

The percentage of students increasing their scores on individual categories by at least 25 percent indicates the most significant improvement in student writing while taking a Writing Intensive course. The greatest number of students who displayed a significant increase in their score was in the areas of “Critical Response to Writing Task and the Text” and “Development of Writer’s Ideas” in which 31 and 28 percent, respectively, of the students increased their score by at least 25 percent. Thus, over the course of a semester in a WI course, almost one-third of the students in the study improved their critical discussion of ideas read in a text while demonstrating an understanding of the complexity of ideas presented. Moreover, they were able to skillfully develop their ideas using material from the text to support their response.

The area of lowest improvement was “Structure of the Responses,” meaning the progression and clarity of ideas throughout the response and transitions throughout the text conveying relationships throughout the response. Overall, 18 percent of students improved their scores by at least 25 percent. However, 73 percent of the students exhibited no change or an increase in score.

The WID/WAC Committee was pleased to have developed this first study of Student Learning Outcomes in WI Courses. The WID/WAC Committee supports the continued assessment of the WI Program as an important area of sustained assessment efforts at Queensborough. The WID/WAC Committee Chair was informed by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Academic Senate Steering Committee that future assessment of the WI Program should be conducted by a body other than an Academic Senate Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

WID/WAC Committee (2010-2011, 2011-2012)

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