

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

English

(Instructional Degree Program)

F-2001-Sp-2002

(Assessment Period Covered)

Undergraduate

(Degree Level)

September 2002

(Date Submitted)

Intended Educational (Student) Outcome:

NOTE: There should be one form C for each intended outcome listed on form B. Intended outcome should be restated in the box immediately below and the intended outcome number entered in the blank spaces.

English majors will develop research skills, including the ability to search data bases, evaluate published materials, and incorporate information gleaned from articles of literary criticism, source texts, and works of historical/social background into their own critical essays and creative writing.

First Means of Assessment for Outcome Identified Above:

1 a. Means of Program Assessment & Criteria for Success:

Data was collected from two sections of the English major introductory course, ENGL 170, The Practice of Criticism, and from two 300-level courses. Individual instructors compiled the data by scoring papers that included research according to the Assessment Scoring Sheet (see APPENDIX 1).

We expect that 20% (or more) of the students will earn scores of "4" in each research category; 60% or more will earn scores of at least 2 or 3; 20% or fewer will earn scores of 1. 1=inadequate; 2=competency; 3 & 4 exceed competency (3="very good"; 4= "superior").

1 a. Summary of Assessment Data Collected:

Assessment Data totals (out of 96 papers). SEE APPENDIX 2, Chart 1

Evidence: 4--30 students or 31.25%; 3--30 students or 31.25%; 2--23 students or 24%; 1--13 students or 13.5%
Comprehension: 4--35 students or 36.5%; 3--34 students or 35.4%; 2--23 students or 24%; 1--4 students or 4.1%
Quotations: 4--24 students or 25%; 3--28 students or 29.16% 2--31 students or 32.3% 1--13 students or 13.54%
Documentation: 4--28 students or 29.2% ; 3--29 students or 30.2% ; 2--22 students or 22.9% ; 1--17 students or 17.7%

Assessment Data separated out for ENGL 170 and 300-Level:

ENGL 170 (50 papers) SEE APPENDIX 2, Chart 2

Evidence: 4--22 students or 44%; 3--14 students or 28%; 2--11 students or 22%; 1--3 students or 6%
Comprehension: 4--23 students or 46%; 3--17 students or 34%; 2--10 students or 20%; 1--0 students or 0%
Quotations: 4--17 students or 34%; 3--14 students or 28% 2--17 students or 34% 1-2- students or 4%
Documentation: 4--18 students or 36% ; 3--14 students or 28% ; 2--11 students or 22% ; 1--7 students or 14%

300-Level: (46 papers) SEE APPENDIX 2, Chart 3

Evidence: 4--8 students or 17.4%; 3--16 students or 34.8%; 2--12 students or 26.1%; 1--10 students or 21.7%
Comprehension: 4--12 students or 26%; 3--17 students or 37%; 2--13 students or 28.3%; 1--4 students or 8.7%
Quotations: 4--7 students or 15.2%; 3--14 students or 30.4% 2--14 students or 30.4% 1--11 students or 24%
Documentation: 4--10 students or 21.7% ; 3--15 students or 32.6% ; 2--11 students or 24% ; 1--10 students or 21.7%

How well do students in English courses support assertions in their papers with researched evidence?

This question expects students to be able to search for literary criticism and incorporate it appropriately into the essays they write. On the whole, all students did this well; only 13.5% of all the students assessed were

judged “inadequate” in this area, and over 31% were judged “superior.” This result breaks down, however, when the students’ work in English 170 (Practice of Criticism) is distinguished from the work turned in for 300-level courses. The lower-level students had distinguished scores (44% “superior” and only 6% “inadequate”). The 300-level students failed to meet the criteria for success (17.4% were rated superior and 21.7 percent were judged “inadequate”).

How well do students in English courses comprehend the source material they cite?

Overall, students scored best in the area of “comprehension,” indicating by the manner in which they discussed their source material that they understood the critic’s argument and could represent it accurately. Only 4.1% of the students were judged “inadequate” in this area, while nearly 36.5 were judged “superior.” Again, the lower-level students out-performed the upper-level students, however. None of the ENGL 170 students was judged “inadequate,” but 8.7% of the 300-level students were. While 26% of the 300-level students were judged “superior” (exceeding the target criteria), 46% of their peers in the ENGL 170 courses received that rating.

How well do students in English courses incorporate quotations into their essays?

Because literature students analyze texts in their essays, it is important that they incorporate quotations from both primary sources and secondary sources in a way that will enhance the effectiveness of their arguments. This means that quotations must be included selectively. The professor evaluating a student’s essay might ask, “Has the writer chosen to quote a passage that could effectively be paraphrased? Is the writer simply substituting the words of a literary critic for his/her own rather than analyzing the critic’s points?” Quotations must also be appropriately introduced (avoiding “dropped quotations”) and subsequently addressed by the writer. Overall, the students met the target criteria: 25% were judged “superior”; 13.5% performed this skill inadequately. The 300-level students, however, fell short of the target criteria: only 15.2% were judged “superior” while 24% were judged “inadequate.”

How well do students in English document their sources in their essays?

Documentation is a fairly mechanical process. Students of literature are expected to follow MLA style conventions for parenthetical citations, occasional footnotes, and “Works Cited” listings. More than half of the students overall were rated “very good” or “superior,” and the students as a whole met the target criteria. Upper-level students scored lower than ENGL 170 students in this area, falling short of the target criteria for “inadequate” with a rate of 21.7%.

Why is there a discrepancy between the performances of students in these upper and lower division courses?

- The explanation for this discrepancy could be as simple as low inter-rater reliability. Four different professors scored the essays, and each scored papers only from her own course.
- There is a qualitative difference in the kind of assignments given in ENGL 170 and the 300-level courses. Students in 300-level courses must sustain their arguments in longer essays (ranging from 8 to 15 pages); this may make some students inattentive to detail, especially students who lack time-management skills and try to rush an extensive essay.
- The courses are also distinguished pedagogically. Since the Fall 2001 term, all ENGL 170 students have had mandatory sessions with a Milne reference librarian. Research skills are clearly fresh for these students, since they discuss them explicitly in class. Since the requirement is new, however, it is also possible that some students in the 300-level courses have slipped through the cracks and never learned particular research skills.

1 a. Use of Results to Improve Instructional Program:

The English Department will use the results of this assessment during its F-2002 curriculum review. We will continue to ensure that all students are instructed in research techniques by including the research skills unit in ENGL 170, The Practice of Criticism. Additionally, the curriculum review will allow faculty to discuss how frequently we make assignments demanding research skills in upper-level courses, and how well these skills are reinforced across the curriculum.

Second Means of Assessment for Outcome Identified Above:**1 b. Means of Program Assessment & Criteria for Success:**

Faculty who scored essays for the first means of assessment included some qualitative comments on the scoring sheets. These comments supplement the numerical data by specifying particular problems instructors saw repeated throughout a class set of papers. Rather than submitting these qualitative comments to “criteria of success,” the English Department’s Assessment Committee tracked the comments in order to report to the faculty concerns raised during the essay scoring.

1 b. Summary of Assessment Data Collected:

These are the most frequent comments recorded concerning students’ research skills from the 96 assessed papers:

1. The essay lacks enough sources to satisfy the assignment.
2. The writer cites information from a critical article but misses the main argument.
3. The writer does not know how to set up block quotations.
4. The writer does not understand MLA format.
5. The writer fails to include parenthetical citations after quotations.
6. The writer needs to develop her/his argument posited against the criticism.
7. The writer needs to include follow-up comments after quotations.
8. The writer needs to introduce the critic or argument; the essay is full of dropped quotations.
9. The writer needs to match critics mentioned in the essay with those included in the Works Cited list.
10. The writer needs to punctuate with quotation marks.
11. The writer needs to vary the way s/he introduces quotations (“too many ‘says’”).
12. The writer should include the critic’s first and last name in the first citation.
13. The writer uses only web sources; the writer uses newspaper reviews; the writer needs to differentiate among Internet resources.
14. The writer uses the critic’s words to substitute for her own; the critic’s exact words are not always necessary.
15. The writer’s sources come from *Reference Guide to English Literature* rather than professional journals.

1 b. Use of Results to Improve Instructional Program:

The faculty of the Department of English will discuss this list of common errors with students in their literature and writing courses, recommending that students consult the *MLA Manual of Style*, general writing handbooks, and the *Geneseo Online Writing Guide*.

Appendix 1

English Department Assessment of Student Writing & Research

Assessment Scoring Form

Please rank the writer in each of the following categories by checking the appropriate box:

1. The writer supports assertions with researched evidence.

superior (4) very good (3) competent (2) inadequate (1)

2. The writer comprehends the source material cited.

superior (4) very good (3) competent (2) inadequate (1)

3. The writer includes quotations appropriately.

superior (4) very good (3) competent (2) inadequate (1)

4. The writer documents sources appropriately.

superior (4) very good (3) competent (2) inadequate (1)

Note: a score of 3 or 4 exceeds competency; a score of 2 is competent; a score of 1 indicates lack of competency.

Appendix 2

CHART 1

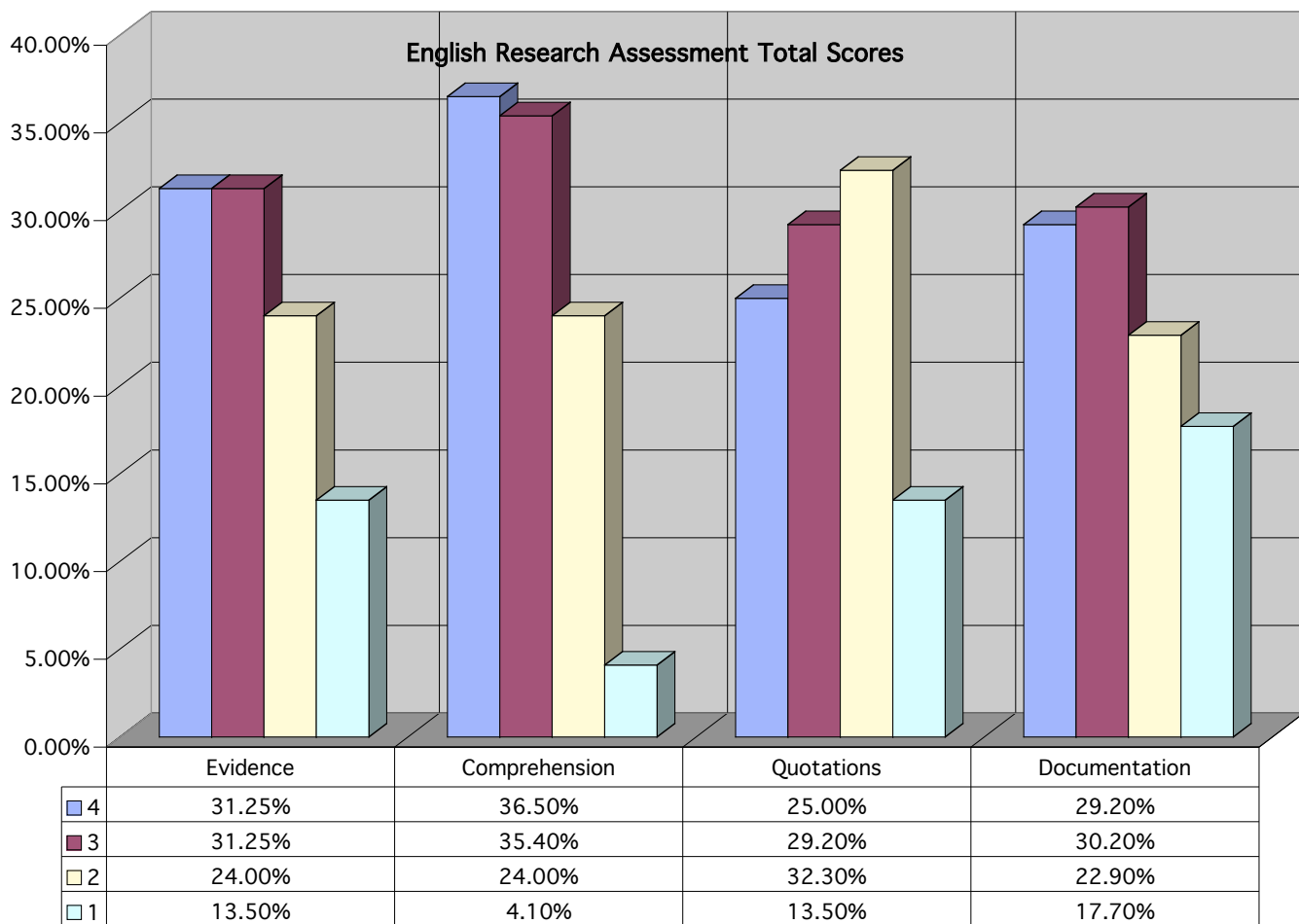


CHART 2

**ENGL Research Assessment
ENGL 170 Students**

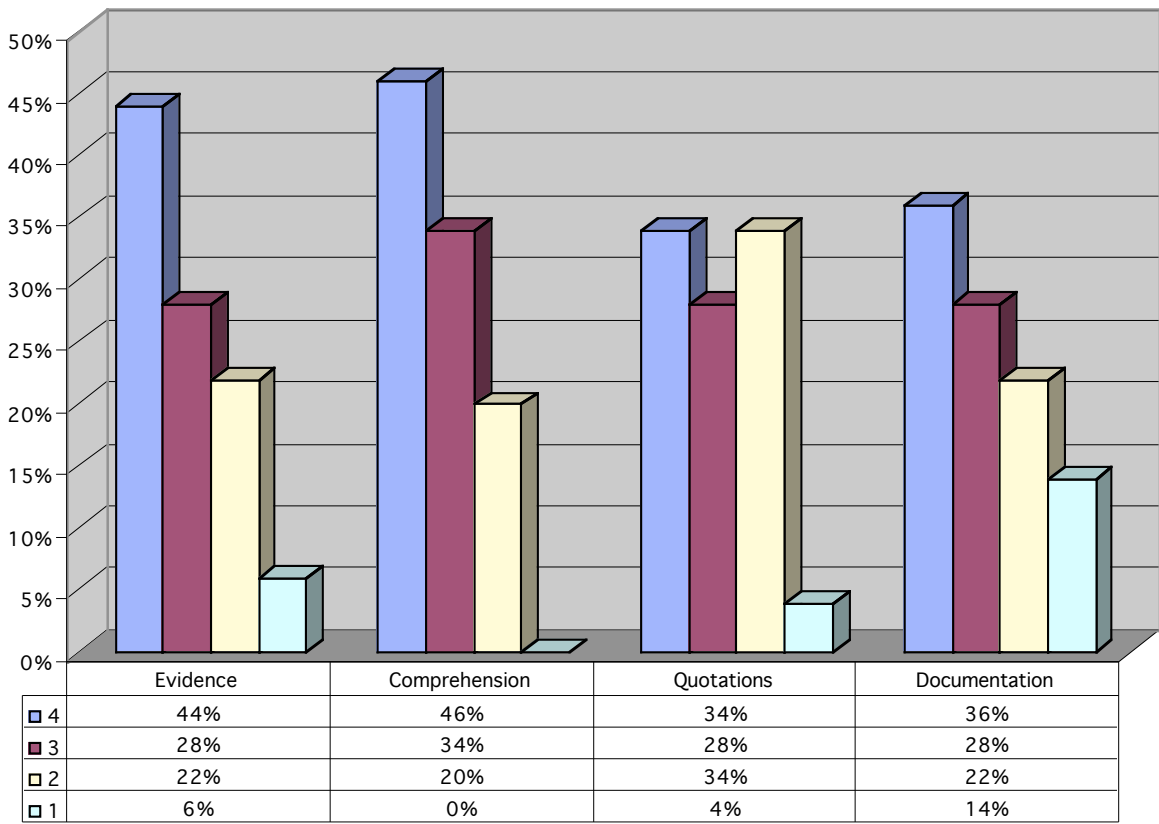


CHART 3

**English Research Assessment
300-level Students**

