

Annual Assessment Report

Department: *English*

Academic Year: *Combined report for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 (delayed 2018-2019 report with permission, due to delay with Portfolium in finalizing data from Written Comm. ILO assessment)*

Date of Submission: *Oct. 2020*

Department Chair: *Sarah Skripsky*

I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

<p>Item: <i>Set the benchmarks for your revised PLOs.</i></p>	<p>Response: In our 4/16/2019 department meeting, we updated our English Department Curriculum Map, assigning different courses to students' different levels of progress (Introduced, Developed, or Mastered) on our program learning outcomes (PLOs). We assigned split levels of PLOs for our major author courses (D for lower-division students, M for upper-division students) and for the ENG 192 Capstone class (D for students pursuing a project in a genre or area for which they have had no coursework, M for students pursuing a project that is essentially a revision of previous course assignments). As a spin-off from this discussion, we entertained the idea of requiring a critical component for capstone projects in the area of creative writing.</p> <p>We also established benchmarks for our PLOs, noted in the Curriculum Map (Appendix I).</p>
<p>Item: <i>Consider comparing your curriculum with peer institutions for ideas on sustaining or increasing enrollments.</i></p>	<p>Response: We continue to be concerned with a decline in our majors in the course of the last decade (Appendix II), similar to what other English and Humanities departments have experienced nationwide.</p> <p>Westmont's new Writing Minor is, in part, a Humanities recruiting tool comparable to what has been used by other English departments). The Writing Minor has been moderately successful in its first three years, attracting majors in Art,</p>

	<p>Communication Studies, Economics and Business, History, Liberal Studies, Philosophy, Psychology, and Religious Studies to writing courses in the English department and beyond (Appendix III). We would do well to continue recruiting more Writing Minors; the Provost’s office has supported these efforts by designing recruiting videos and then submitting them routinely for Dining Commons showing.</p> <p>In conversation with the Provost and Academic Senate, we have made some progress in collaborating with Admissions to improve external marketing for English majors, English minors, and Writing minors. Nancy Phinney and the graphic designers working with Admissions invited substantial input from our department in revising the English major flyer for prospective students: highlighting a more contemporary range of courses, appealing photos of our students engaging with literary texts and with each other, and experiential learning opportunities on off-campus programs. We also revised the English department letter sent to admitted students in order to reflect the exciting contributions of newer colleagues as well as the latest research and teaching foci of continuing colleagues. The Provost has also encouraged Admissions counselors to include the C.S. Lewis wardrobe in Reynolds Hall on campus tours for prospective and admitted students, and V.P. Irene Neller now supports that idea (first pitched by Paul Willis). In Spring 2020, we submitted a Proposal for an Innovative Edges Grant to improve our Admissions partnership; the grant was declined, but the Provost has encouraged us to find other ways to continue that work. One example is a Zoom session that Admissions advertised and co-hosted for prospective English majors in Spring 2020; though that session was poorly attended, the feedback was positive, and it was a helpful test run for recruiting events that can continue in remote environments as needed.</p>
<p>Item: Consider revising the key questions you identified in your 2016 Six-Year Report in light of your work [since that time].</p>	<p>Response: In keeping with other institutions of higher education, we have increased our attention to anti-racist work (in effect, pursuing a new key question: “In what ways is our department/curriculum racist or anti-racist, and how can we become more anti-racist?”). Within the English department, we have formed three working groups devoted to reflection and revisions in our department. These groups have been</p>

	gathering information and are making recommendations in November 2020; more information is available upon request.
Item: <i>Continue the pattern of effective assessment established in 2017-2018.</i>	Response: Members of our department both led and supported two large-scale assessments: the Written Communication ILO assessment (Spring/Mayterm 2019) and the Reading Imaginative Literature GE Assessment (Fall 2019). These assessments allowed us to complete our PLO assessments within the context of broader, institutional review.
Notes:	

II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

If your department participated in the ILO assessment you may use this section to report on your student learning in relation to the assessed ILO. The assessment data can be requested from the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness.

Program Learning Outcome	<p>Writing with Rhetorical Sensitivity PLO: <i>Engage various audiences in writing with sensitivity to rhetorical situations and scholarly standards.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned with <i>Written Comm. ILO: Graduates of Westmont College will “write effectively in various contexts.”</i> The information in this section focuses on the <i>Written Comm. ILO assessment of 2019.</i> • <i>Our ENG 192 Capstone group of 16 was part of the sample of 164 participating writers. Appendix IV includes anonymized data from those participating English majors; in the English-major data set, we did not see any red flags meriting follow-up.</i>
Who is in Charge /Involved?	<p><i>Six English colleagues: Sarah Skripsky (Lead Assessment Specialist), Theresa Covich (Assessment Team Member, adjunct English faculty), Cheri Larsen Hoeckley, Kya Mangrum, Carmen McCain, and Paul Willis. These English colleagues worked among an interdisciplinary group of faculty reading and scoring writing samples from multiple departments during the Mayterm 2019 assessment workshop. (Kya and Sarah, along with Stephen Contakes in Chemistry, did additional scoring of writing samples after Mayterm to improve inter-rater reliability.) Additional information is available in the CUPA Assessment Report.</i></p>
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	<p>Scoring writing samples from students in Capstone/senior courses (n=164) from all three academic divisions using a normed Written Comm. ILO Rubric with 5 criteria, adapted from the 2011-2012 assessment. Additional details are in the CUPA Assessment Report. Quantitative results are as follows:</p>

Disaggregated Data Table: Written Communication ILO Assessment, 2019

Criteria	Total Possible Score	ALL Average (n=164)	Females (n=95)	Males (n=65)	"White" Students (n=102)	"Students of Color" (n=55)
Rhetorical Awareness	5	3.262	3.337	3.195	3.343	3.173
Rhetorical Sensitivity and Mobility	5	3.091	3.132	3.036	3.152	3.000
Content/Message	5	3.326	3.358	3.283	3.441	3.136
Form/Organization	5	3.256	3.258	3.254	3.319	3.145
Style: Grammar, Syntax, Punctuation	5	3.235	3.300	3.145	3.304	3.109

Criteria	Total Possible Score	ALL Average (n=164)	no ENG2/104 (n=99)	ENG2 completers (n=47)	ENG2 and/or 104 completers (n=65)
Rhetorical Awareness	5	3.262	3.227	3.266	3.315
Rhetorical Sensitivity and Mobility	5	3.091	3.076	3.032	3.115
Content/Message	5	3.326	3.318	3.245	3.338
Form/Organization	5	3.256	3.303	3.106	3.185
Style: Grammar, Syntax, Punctuation	5	3.235	3.308	3.025	3.123

Demographic notes:

The disaggregated data sets for "White" students (n=102) and "Students of Color" (n=55) exclude 7 students in the total sample for whom we lack identifying data. The category "Students of Color" includes students identifying as American/Alaskan Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, and/or Hispanic/Latinx.

Indirect Assessment Methods

Qualitative feedback from participating faculty and staff, primarily those Mayterm 2019 workshop participants contributing to Written Comm. ILO assessment. Qualitative feedback is summarized here:

- **Students would benefit from more audience-specific writing practice.** John Bean’s *Engaging Ideas* includes related “RAFT+TIP” criteria for assignment design; **faculty would benefit from using these criteria** in (re)designing writing assignments.
- **Students would benefit from more training on how to be public intellectuals**, combining audience sensitivity with effective argumentation and style.
 - In particular, we would do well to encourage students to write more often for (1) church audiences [including Christians who are not immersed in academic discourse] and (2) public audiences who are not necessarily Christian [while writers may retain and “translate” Christian commitments]. *Such assignments contribute to our CUPA ILO as well as the Written Comm. ILO.*

<p>Major Findings</p>	<p>Satisfactory performance (averaging scores of least 3 out of 5 possible on all 5 criteria) from participating students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative data analysis suggests a relative weakness in the “rhetorical sensitivity and mobility” of participants, a weakness consistent with our previous Written Comm. ILO assessment. <i>See “closing the loop” recommendations below.</i> • Disaggregated data sets include female vs. male participants, participants identifying with various ethnic identities, and students who completed ENG 002 and/or ENG 104 prior to participating in the Written Comm. ILO assessment.¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On average, female participants scored higher than male participants. ○ On average, students identifying as “white” scored higher than participants who identified primarily with other ethnicities. <i>Anecdotally, a significant number of Westmont’s “students of color”—especially Latinx students—are first-generation students. These demographics merit more study before we can accurately recommend “closing the loop” activities.</i> ○ Students who completed ENG 002 prior to the Written Comm. ILO assessment <i>largely</i> closed the “achievement gaps” typical of the incoming students required to take ENG 002 (in comparison with those “test out” of ENG 002 due to previous coursework and/or high test scores).
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- At the May 2019 workshop, we reviewed initial disaggregated data sets by department and discussed potential implications for teaching and curriculum design with faculty representing many of those departments. To honor a condition of participation for some departments, however, we are not publishing disaggregated data by department in the Written Comm. ILO report. Department chairs may contact Manuela Long to request raw data or basic analysis relevant to their departments.

Closing the Loop Activities

***Provisional recommendations already discussed with the Academic Senate: to be discussed further with the Provost**

General recommendation: Our writing-intensive GE courses would benefit from more strategic planning and support.

- As recommended in the previous Written Comm. ILO Assessment report, assign a faculty member to serve as a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) director: to identify gaps or problems in our current map of writing-intensive GE courses, and to support faculty (re)designing writing-intensive assignments.
- Alternatively or in addition, hire a WAC consultant to assist with related initiatives: teaching faculty development workshops on assignment design, on responding effectively to student writing, etc.

To support students' development in the **rhetorical dimensions** of our Written Comm. ILO:

1. **Continue to use ENG 002 as an introduction to “rhetorical awareness” and “rhetorical sensitivity and mobility.”** However, we should **revisit ENG 002 placement and enrollment practices** in order to support students' development and potentially reduce faculty workloads in other writing-intensive courses.
 - **Revisit placement methods for ENG 002.** Directed Self-Placement (DSP) has shown multiple benefits at other institutions. For example, *reducing reliance on standardized testing* empowers the student (increasing engagement in the selected course) and contributes to anti-racist practices.
 - **Require ENG 002 or equivalent (GE Writing for the Liberal Arts) for junior status, or make ENG 002 a prerequisite for other GE Writing-Intensive courses.** Some of the students who would most benefit from ENG 002 delay taking it due to anxiety or other factors/priorities. In the meantime, students who delay ENG 002 are dependent on other courses and faculty to help them build a foundational understanding of college-level writing and rhetoric.
2. In addition to ENG 002, **identify other courses that are well suited to support students' rhetorical development** (e.g., first-year seminars, introductory courses in COM / HIS / PHI / POL / PSY / SOC / etc., and advanced writing-intensive courses such as ENG 104 and the Capstone/senior courses participating in this assessment).
 - a. Create a Curriculum Map and/or a writing portfolio requirement to support students' rhetorical development across semesters. **Could require for junior status? Useful for randomized assessment every 6 years?*
 - b. Review course caps in Writing-Intensive GE course courses to ensure that faculty can provide sufficient response to drafts. In cases where caps are greater than 20, imbedded writing tutors (Writing Associates) can assist faculty and students.
 - c. Support faculty with appropriate teaching resources (ideally, in partnership with a WAC director or consultant). To increase students' rhetorical development, especially in “rhetorical sensitivity and

mobility,” faculty would do well to provide more “authentic tasks” with audience-specific writing guidelines, whether targeting audiences in their disciplines, public or church audiences, or others. Our Christian liberal arts graduates can be more effective when they are equipped not only to contribute to particular disciplines or guilds but also to contemporary culture(s) as “public intellectuals”—sometimes even as “prophetic voices” in their workplaces, churches, and more.

Collaboration and Communication

Program Learning Outcome	<p>Reading Carefully PLO: <i>Read literary texts carefully, analyzing both the contexts and the techniques (e.g., literary devices and genre characteristics) that shape their meaning.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed with the GE Reading Imaginative Literature assessment of 2019-2020. 																								
Who is in Charge /Involved?	<p>Paul Delaney, Professor of English, lead assessment specialist for GE Reading Imaginative Literature assessment</p> <p>The Fall 2019 courses that were assessed were the following:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">ENG-006WA</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Studies in Literature</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Paul Delaney</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENG-007H</td> <td>First-Year Honors Seminar in Literature</td> <td>Randy VanderMey</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENG-044-1</td> <td>Studies in World Literature</td> <td>Carmen McCain</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENG-044-2</td> <td>Studies in World Literature</td> <td>Carmen McCain</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENG-060</td> <td>Writers in Conversation</td> <td>Kya Mangrum</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ENG-134</td> <td>Ethnicity and Race in American Literature</td> <td>Kya Mangrum</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SP-180</td> <td>Latin American Women Writers</td> <td>Dinora Cardoso</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TA-001</td> <td>Great Literature of the Stage</td> <td>John Blondell</td> </tr> </table>	ENG-006WA	Studies in Literature	Paul Delaney	ENG-007H	First-Year Honors Seminar in Literature	Randy VanderMey	ENG-044-1	Studies in World Literature	Carmen McCain	ENG-044-2	Studies in World Literature	Carmen McCain	ENG-060	Writers in Conversation	Kya Mangrum	ENG-134	Ethnicity and Race in American Literature	Kya Mangrum	SP-180	Latin American Women Writers	Dinora Cardoso	TA-001	Great Literature of the Stage	John Blondell
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<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	<p>Students in Reading Imaginative Literature G.E. classes were assessed in five areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Comprehension B. Recognition of Genre C. Identification of the Implications of Language beyond Its Literal Level D. Analysis E. Thesis and Argumentation <p>Student work was categorized into four levels of accomplishment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4—Highly Developed 3—Developed 2—Emerging 1—Initial <p>A zero (0) was used for unacceptable work that fell below an Initial level of expectation.</p>																								

Major Findings

***Provisional findings: final data pending from Portfolio**

See GE Reading Imaginative Literature assessment report (excerpts below are from a semifinal draft by Paul Delaney).

For Comprehension and Recognition of Genre, the highly developed category (level 4) was the most numerous for respondents as a whole, closely followed by the developed category (level 3). For the other three areas, level 3 was the most numerous followed by level 4. **But in any event, the two highest levels of accomplishment were the two most numerous levels of attainment in all five areas for students in the aggregate. Those are gratifying results.**

Among disaggregated data, the two highest levels of attainment were also the most numerous for women across all five areas. A first glance at the graphs on the rubric report seems to indicate that women towered above men in terms of Comprehension. A remarkable 44% of women scored in the highest level of accomplishment in Comprehension with 23% in the second highest level of accomplishment and 22% in the emerging category. By contrast, a mere 21% of men scored in the highest level of accomplishment in Comprehension with 39% in level 3 and 37% in level 2.

There was some consolation for men in terms of Thesis and Argumentation (hereafter referred to as “Argumentation”) where 72% of men scored in the top two levels of attainment compared to 64% of women. But the graphs of accomplishment by males and females largely track as similar except for the area of Comprehension where women enjoy a huge advantage.

... Perhaps unsurprisingly, students in upper-division classes scored higher than students in lower-division students in all categories. However, the study only included two upper-division classes: ENG 134 and SP 180. At first glance what might appear to be lower results in terms of Recognition of Genre just reflects the extent to which upper-division students were enrolled in classes in which considerations of genre were not applicable (as, for example, in classes which focus on fiction). Gratifyingly, no students in upper-division classes were reported to be at an initial area of attainment in any of the five areas. **The one area in which there might be room for improvement is Argumentation where 26% of upper-division students were still at an emerging level of attainment (though a gratifyingly large 73% of upper-division students were in the two highest levels of attainment even in the area of Argumentation).**

... Although there is always room for improvement, **no red flags emerge from this study.** All students are demonstrating reasonable levels of accomplishment in all areas—except for those remarkably disappointing scores in Thesis and Argumentation by students who have put off taking a Reading Imaginative Literature course until their senior year. The Average Criteria Score for All Samples . . . shows somewhat weaker performance in Identification of the Implications of Language beyond Its Literal Level.

<p>Closing the Loop Activities</p>	<p>Preliminary recommendations (written by Paul Delaney):</p> <p>In a debriefing session in July 2020 to discuss the assessment results, faculty involved in the assessment raised questions about what sort of array of assessment tools might be employed in future years.</p> <p>Randy VanderMey questioned whether faculty in English, Spanish, and Theatre Arts all share the same understanding of such concepts as “reading,” “imaginative,” “literature,” “analysis,” “comprehension,” “genre,” figurative language,” “thesis or argument,” and “mastery.” Suggesting that we may be operating with different sets of values, assumptions, policies, parameters, or standards of rigor, he mused that perhaps an assessment of students might be based not on an essay they have written for class but on something like a musician’s capacity to “sight read.” So a student could be confronted by a new piece of literature, a photo, a film clip, a sonnet. Rather than ask the student to “interpret” the work, the student could be asked what an attentive reader would want to consider in the given text. What would a careful reader attend to when reading this text? How would one go about reading it well?</p> <p>In response to Randy’s idea, others suggested that students could be given a pre-test early in the semester and then again at the end to compare how their awareness of criteria to be addressed had changed . . . As we played with the possible phrasing of such a prompt, the wording that emerged was: “What are the factors that an attentive reader would want to consider in interpreting this text?” . . . [T]he consensus that seemed to emerge from our discussion was that faculty teaching RIL courses should choose a text of some kind and ask students early on “What are the factors that an attentive reader would want to consider in interpreting this text?” Then near the end of the semester, students could be asked to apply the same prompt (to the same text? or to a different text?) to see how their awareness of possible factors to consider in literary interpretation may have changed.</p>
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or/and

III. Follow-ups

<p>Program Learning Outcome or Key Question</p>	<p>When “closing the loop” on the CUPA ILO assessment, we added an <i>Identifying Religious Rhetoric PLO</i>: <i>Identify how literary writers have alluded to the Bible and other religious texts in order to achieve particular rhetorical effects—for example, in addressing issues of justice.</i></p>
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Who was involved in implementation?	During a January 2020 department meeting, English colleagues drafted and adopted the new <i>Identifying Religious Rhetoric PLO</i> .
What was decided or addressed?	The new PLO is one of our teaching commitments in 2020-2021 academic year. Two target classes for student learning in this area are a Fall 2020 section of ENG 060 (“The Bible and/as Literature” course with Paul Willis) and the Spring 2021 section of ENG 192 Capstone.
How were the recommendations implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Fall 2020, ENG 060 is being taught for the first time with a Bible and/as Literature theme, proposed by Paul Willis during our Jan. 2020 department meeting focusing on “closing the loop” on the CUPA ILO assessment. • In Spring 2021, a revised prompt for the ENG 192 Capstone faith-learning essay will focus on the new <i>Identifying Religious Rhetoric PLO</i> and provide writing samples suitable for a first assessment of that outcome.