

REPORT ON SUMMER 2017 ENGLISH COMPOSITION ASSESSMENT

Submitted by

Dr. Robert Ellison, Coordinator of Assessment, Department of English
Dr. Kelli Prejean, Coordinator of Composition, Department of English**Introduction**

Prior to AY 2016-2017, ENG 201: Advanced Composition was included in the English Department's assessment days, which took place in January and May each year. For the first time in summer 2017, the Composition Program shifted its work to the end of the academic year, making its process more consistent with other university general education assessments. The Composition Program assessors completed their work during the week of June 19-23, 2017.

Staffing

In addition to Drs. Robert Ellison and Kelli Prejean, eight English faculty participated in our assessment:

- Dr. Ryan Angus
- Prof. Abby Daniel
- Prof. Mitchell Lilly
- Dr. Cody Lumpkin
- Prof. Amine Oudghiri-Otmani
- Dr. Margaret Sullivan
- Dr. Anthony Viola
- Dr. Forrest Roth

Procedure

During the 2016-17 academic year, the Composition Committee and the assessment team worked to create the rubric, which is included in this report. Drs. Ellison, Prejean, and Reynolds agreed that the team would assess a random sample of 15% of the artifacts submitted in the fall and spring semesters. That worked out to approximately 210 artifacts: 170 selected via Blackboard Outcomes and the rest from hard copies submitted by off-campus instructors whose students did not have ready access to Blackboard. Each artifact would be read by two assessors, meaning that each assessor would score approximately 50 artifacts over the course of the week.

Timeline

The team met in the morning of Monday, June 19 to be sure everyone was familiar with the technology to be used for scoring and attend to any other final housekeeping matters. The assessors were then free to work on their own, with the understanding that the work would be complete by midnight on Wednesday, June 21. Dr. Ellison used Thursday to identify discrepancies in the scores, and the team met again on Friday to reconcile those discrepancies, evaluate the pilot program, and make recommendations for the 2017-18 year.

Scoring and Results

Scores were processed using the same procedure as Dr. Reynolds' summer workgroup:

- Adjacent scores were averaged
- Artifacts with scores that differed by two points were selected for reconciliation
- Artifacts that received a score from one assessor and a "Cannot Evaluate" from the other were also selected for reconciliation

This report includes the following charts:

- Average scores for all traits, including scores of zero ("Cannot Evaluate")
- Averages excluding scores of zero
- The percentages of artifacts that scored at each performance level for each trait
- The percentages of scores that needed to be reconciled for each trait

NOTE: Although the instructor assignments were collected and evaluated, scores were not analyzed for agreement but were used as a basis for discussion of professional development opportunities and how more effective assignment design could be used to invite stronger student writing.

RUBRIC**STUDENT'S CULMINATING ARTIFACT****RHETORICAL/DISOURSE COMPETENCY**

1.1 LOGIC OF POSITION WITHIN ARGUMENT/ISSUE: Ability to position themselves within public conversations and to compose a logical argument supported by research. [Student establishes relevant context for their position through effective use of research.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Argument contains gaps in logic and/or is not adequately supported by reasons and evidence.	Argument demonstrates developing awareness of effective logic and organization and is adequately supported by reasons and evidence.	Argument has a sophisticated logic and skillfully uses reasons and evidence.	

1.2 CLARITY OF AUDIENCE, PURPOSE, AND STYLE: Ability to attend to issues of audience, purpose and rhetorical context. [Students use tone and diction suitable for topic and intended audience. The delivery of their information makes clear their overall purpose.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Vocabulary and tone are not suitable for intended meaning and purpose.	Vocabulary and tone are mostly suitable for intended audience and purpose.	Vocabulary and tone show a sophisticated awareness of intended audience and purpose.	

1.3 CONTEXT OF INFORMATION: Ability to analyze the stylistic conventions and rhetorical patterns of selected texts and to recognize the different stakeholders in an argument. [Sources are used strategically through proper introduction of and response to sources in the text.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Sources are disconnected from the context of the argument or used inappropriately.	Sources are adequately contextualized and synthesized within the text.	Sources are integrated correctly and in a rhetorically sophisticated manner.	

INFORMATION LITERACY

2.1 SOURCE INTEGRATION: Ability to work with different texts as researchers, to mine for information, and to effectively use research sources, including online sources, in their writing. [Baseline: Student integrates a minimum of 5 sources within the text of their culminating project; their sources reflect some variety in advocacy and source type; and there are clear attempts to integrate sources within their own writing.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Paper lacks credible sources; writing may rely too heavily on a single source or one kind of source; student does not integrate minimum number of required sources.	Some credible and relevant sources used but writing may still lean heavily on less vigorously reviewed sources; developing awareness of the importance of type and timeliness of selected sources; clear attempts to integrate sources within their own writing.	Writing is supported by credible primary and secondary sources, demonstrating student's ability to locate relevant scholarly material in relation to topic and to integrate those sources effectively within their own writing.	

2.2 SOURCE USAGE MECHANICS: Ability to recognize how and when to use quotation, summary, and paraphrase, and how to examine the ethics of research and writing through proper citation methods. [Baseline: Student relies on a balance of summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation and makes consistent attempts to follow correct citation mechanics.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Quotes, paraphrases, and summaries of sources are used incorrectly or not at all. Paper lacks Works Cited or References page.	Student relies on a balance of summary, paraphrase, and direct quotation and makes consistent attempts to follow correct citation mechanics. Some minor errors in citation mechanics may still be present.	Writing demonstrates sophisticated use of source usage and correct citation in nearly every circumstance.	

CONVENTIONS

3.1 SENTENCE-LEVEL MECHANICS AND USAGE: Ability to understand the importance of grammar, mechanics, and careful proofreading in the process of effective communication. [Student presents a preliminary draft and revised draft that demonstrate attention to sentence-level improvements. Sentence-level errors may still be present in the revised draft but do not impede meaning.]

0- Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Errors are multiple and obstruct the writer's intended meaning.	Communication has only a few errors in style, mechanics, or other issues that might distract from the message.	Communication is virtually free of mechanical, stylistic or other issues that might distract from the message	

STUDENT'S REFLECTION

4.1 REFLECTION: Ability to inquire into and reflect on the development of their research and writing in order to think critically and objectively about their work, internalize and clarify their own research and writing processes, and to self-assess areas in need of improvement. [Students demonstrate understanding of course outcomes and how their work does or does not meet outcomes.]

0-Cannot Evaluate	1-Below Competency	2-Basic Competency	3-Above Competency	NOTES
	Understanding of course outcomes and corresponding learning seems minimal or lacks detail.	Student demonstrates an understanding of course outcomes and how their work does or does not meet outcomes.	Student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of course outcomes and how their work does or does not meet outcomes.	

INSTRUCTOR ASSIGNMENT--Assignment outlines the following criteria:

5.1 Genre: Thesis-driven essay related to course theme.

1-No, Below Competency	2-Yes, Basic Competency	Notes:

5.2 Rhetorical Context: Specific information about audience, purpose, and style (voice, tone).

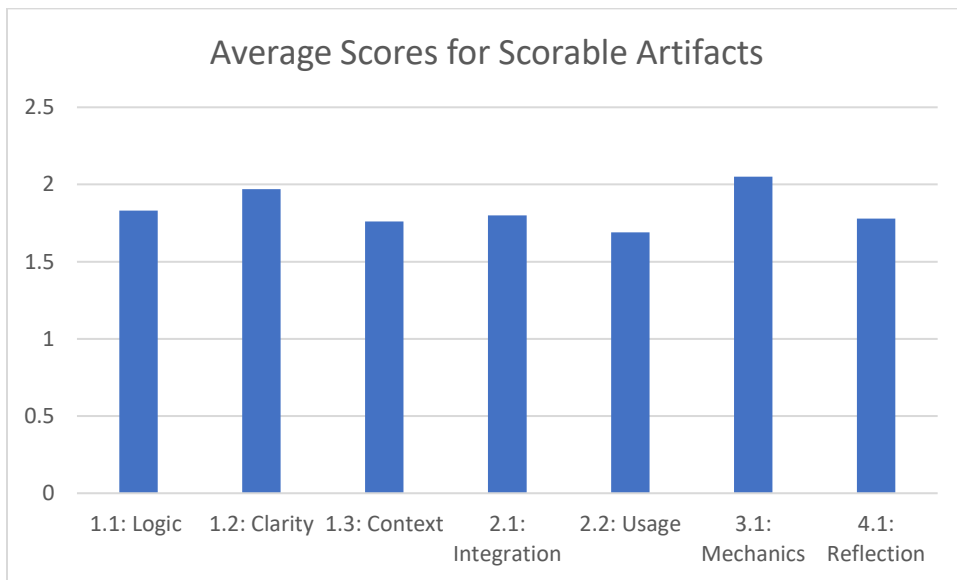
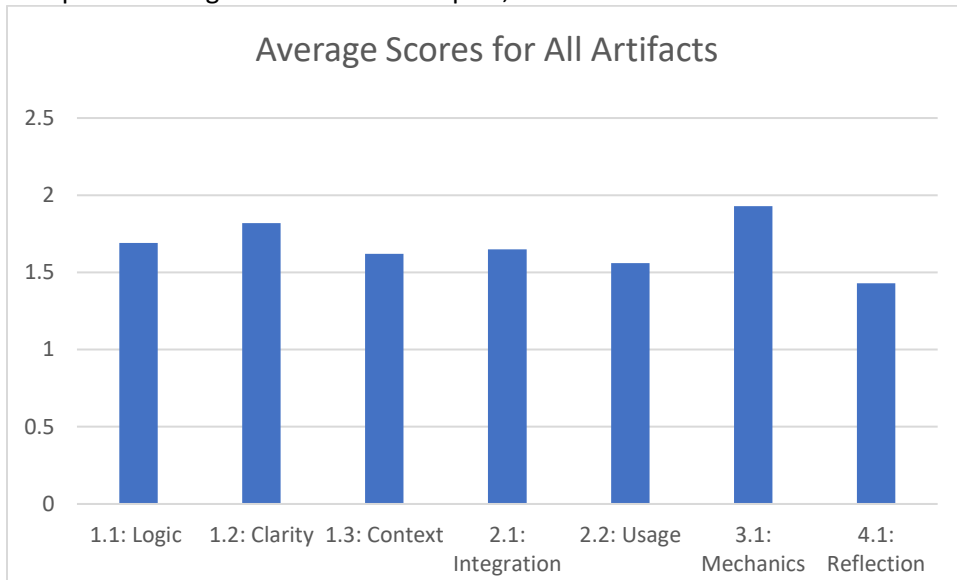
1-No, Below Competency	2-Yes, Basic Competency	Notes:

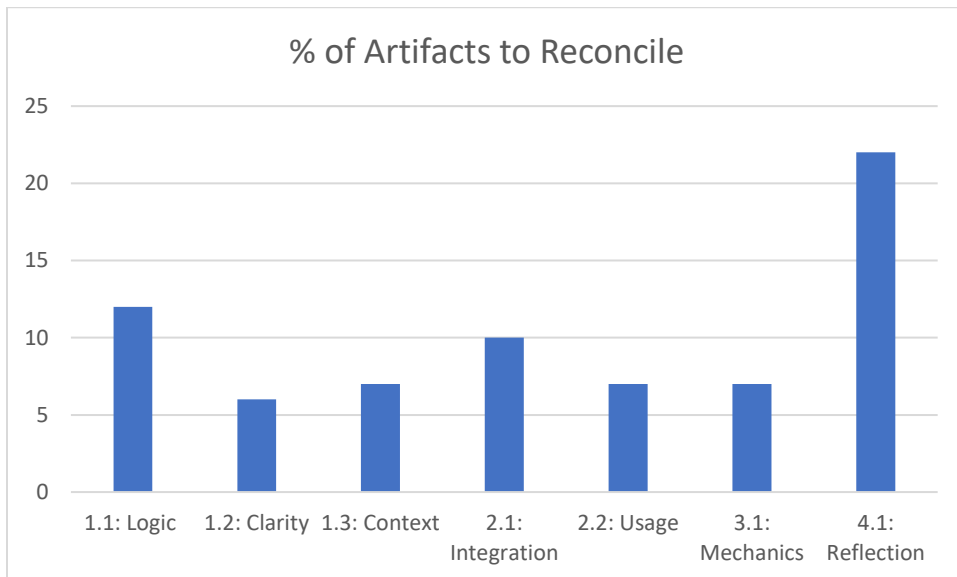
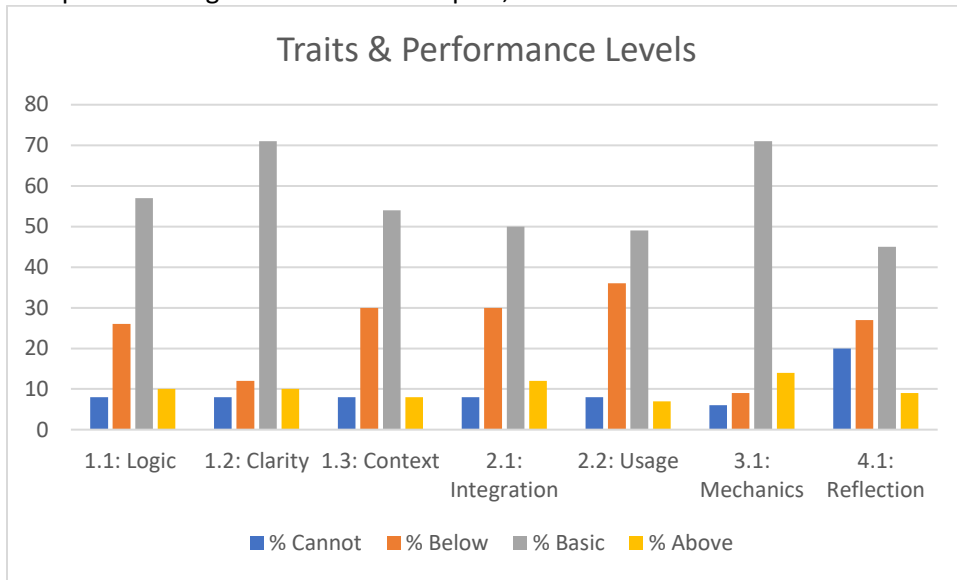
5.3 Information Literacy and Source Usage: Required citation method; type and number of sources; use of sources in relation to argument.

1-No, Below Competency	2-Yes, Basic Competency	Notes:

5.4 Revision and Editing: Development of work through drafts; convention and mechanics expectations.

1-No, Below Competency	2-Yes, Basic Competency	Notes:
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ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Since our assessment process was new, there is no direct comparison to previous years' assessments. In the past few years, we have only assessed one-two of the outcomes for ENG 201, and that assessment focused solely on the reading of one student artifact. The comprehensive nature of this year's assessment gave us a much broader view of the types of writing being assigned and how students connected the application of their learning with the course objectives.

A. Instructor Assignments

Faculty have a good amount of flexibility in helping students achieve the course outcomes for ENG 201. The position of the program is that teachers are more effective when they can craft their materials in ways that suit their interests and expertise, especially when there are faculty from all sub-disciplines of English teaching in the composition program. However, the program did offer some assignment guidelines for AY 2016-2017 to help faculty more clearly design assignments that would invite students to demonstrate their learning across all outcomes. In short, faculty were to assign a thesis-driven essay that required students to incorporate 5-8 credible yet varied sources into their final paper. Students were also to compose a preliminary draft of the paper and reflect on their writing.

In our evaluation of assignments, assessors noted that some assignments did not articulate the expectations provided in the assignment guide, and there seems to be some correlation between lack of direction in an assignment and the quality of the student artifact, particularly in outcomes related to rhetorical applications (logic and context) and source usage. Our findings suggest that more instruction may be needed in those areas, and perhaps more direct language in writing assignments could remind students of the importance of those skills in their writing.

B. Students' Culminating Artifact

Students' weaknesses in source usage and citation have shown up in previous assessments, including assessments in the major, but again, because we do not have direct comparisons, it is difficult to compare numbers. Genre research would suggest that students have not yet acquired the meta-knowledge that would help them to see source usage as part of knowledge-making within their writing. In other words, students are somewhat arbitrarily applying source usage conventions and do not see their work as part of the research conversation; therefore, their use of sources appears stilted and tacked on. While we do not expect first-year students to perform at milestone, we will work with faculty to develop assessments (writing assignments) that more clearly define expectations of source usage and will urge more classroom practice on more sophisticated source usage in the first-year writing sequence.

A more positive finding is that students scored well in issues of style and clarity and sentence-level mechanics, which we hope is an indicator of more attention to revision and editing in first-year writing courses. A solid proportion of students reached a *basic* level of competency in those areas.

C. Students' Reflections

This was the first time we requested and assessed students' reflections on their writing. It is common for writing faculty to assign reflective writing in their courses to assess students' awareness of their writing practices and learning, but this was the first time we collected reflective writing for comp program assessment. Perhaps because it was a new requirement, we found that students and/or faculty overlooked that requirement, and a good many of the artifacts we assessed did not include a reflection. The high reconciliation rate for 4.1 Reflection was due to confusion over how to rate a missing component, but we will address this issue in next year's assessment.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR FACULTY

Since our summer assessment, there have been two professional development opportunities to help support faculty in their design of assignments and in their understanding of the new outcomes (more on the outcomes below), both of

which took place at our fall English faculty workshop on August 16 and 17. In collaboration with Kristin Steele, Dr. Prejean offered a workshop on effective assignment design, followed by a second workshop on our ENG 201 assessment procedure and how faculty might design assignments that clearly invite students to exercise their knowledge of the course outcomes. Some of the materials we used are included in the appendices. We will also make these materials available in our faculty Blackboard organization.

REVISIONS TO OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

As a result of our summer assessment efforts, we redesigned the ENG 201 outcomes to align better with the Council of Writing Program Administrators' national guidelines for first-year writing: <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>. The new guidelines are more effectively organized and offer additional context to help instructors interpret and apply the outcomes in their courses. We also suspect the new outcomes will lend themselves to a more concise rubric for next summer's assessment. These new outcomes are in the appendices.

All in all, using Blackboard Outcomes and applying guidelines to instructors' assignments and students' artifacts proved useful and appropriate for composition program assessment. We experienced a few challenges in interpreting some of the artifacts and in knowing how to assess partial or absent components of students' work, but for the most part, the process went smoothly. To prepare for next summer, we will provide guidelines for assessors that describe various scenarios they might encounter and how best to handle those scenarios in a consistent fashion. We also plan to increase the total number of artifacts we assess since the process did not take as long as we initially expected it would.

Thank you for this opportunity.

APPENDIX A: REVISED OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ENGLISH 201 and 201H—AY 2017-2018

Coordinator's Note:

ENG 201 is a second-semester composition course that builds on the research, writing, and critical thinking skills students acquire in ENG 101/P. To help foster students' development in those areas, there are seven course themes from which students can choose: *Arts in Culture*; *Business and Consumer Culture*; *Community and Identity*; *Education and Literacy*; *Health, Mind, and Body*; *Popular Culture and Mass Media*; and *Science, Environment, and Technology* (see <https://mucompositionprogram.com/welcome/eng-201/> for more information).

These themes reflect some of the disciplinary conversations students might encounter in their majors and are meant to engage students in areas of research that suit their particular interests. Students are not required, however, to select the theme that most aligns with their major and may enroll in any section.

Context has been added to help instructors interpret the outcomes and to align our outcomes more closely with the Council of Writing Program Administrators' "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition": <http://www.wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>.

Writing Requirements: Students will produce at least three (3) polished formal writing projects, one of which will be a longer, sustained research project reflective of the course theme. In addition, students will produce shorter writing pieces leading or connected to their formal writing projects. By the end of the semester, students will have produced a minimum of twenty-five (25) typed, double-spaced pages, including drafts.

Building on the foundations of ENG 101, students in ENG 201/H will continue to:

1. Demonstrate rhetorical knowledge across contexts and audiences.

- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure (WPA Outcomes, "Rhetorical Knowledge").
- Learn how to invoke common expectations between writers and readers and how these expectations vary by genre and discipline (WPA Outcomes, "Knowledge of Conventions").
- Understand why conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary across genres (WPA Outcomes, "Rhetorical Knowledge").

2. Develop writing projects through multiple drafts.

- Use composing processes and tools to discover and reconsider ideas (WPA Outcomes, "Processes").
- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress (WPA Outcomes, "Processes").
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work (WPA Outcomes, "Processes").

3. Apply knowledge of information literacy and ethical citation practices.

- Think critically about the materials they use—whether print texts, photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials—and to separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions, read across texts for connections and patterns, identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations (WPA Outcomes, "Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing").

- Apply citation conventions systematically in their own work (WPA Outcomes, “Knowledge of Conventions”).
- Consider the kinds of questions, problems, and evidence that define writing in different disciplines (WPA Outcomes, “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing”).
- Consider the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication across disciplines (WPA Outcomes, “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing”).

4. Apply knowledge of sentence-level mechanics and usage.

- Demonstrate knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising (WPA Outcomes, “Knowledge of Conventions”).
- Consider the reasons behind conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and citation systems across disciplines (WPA Outcomes, “Knowledge of Conventions”).

COMPOSITION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT, AY 2017-2018

What Will the Process Look Like?

- Instructors will invite students who take ENG 201/H in AY 2017-2018 to participate in the composition program's assessment by submitting work completed in their 201/H courses.
- Assessment of student artifacts for AY 2017-2018 will take place summer 2018 rather than during the department's assessment days.
- Approximately 8-10 people will be selected through an application process to participate in composition program assessment in summer 2018. Assessors will be provided a stipend for their work, and it will take approximately one week to complete assessment.
- We are collecting multiple artifacts as we did in AY 2016-2017 (more details below).
- Artifact collection will still take place via Blackboard Outcomes in MUOnline.

What Artifacts Will Students Have to Submit?

In order to get a more comprehensive picture of student work as it applies to ENG 201's learning outcomes, students must submit the following artifacts:

1. Assignment for the course's culminating artifact.

Instructors who teach ENG 201/H in AY 2017-2018 should assign a writing project that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge of all ENG 201 outcomes. One copy of the assignment text should be provided to students without instructor and course information so that students can upload that information with their artifact.

2. Preliminary draft of culminating artifact

Students must include a preliminary draft of their culminating assignment, and the draft should not contain any identifying information. Students will use the draft to reflect on revision choices between first to final draft.

3. Final draft of culminating artifact

Students must include the final draft of their culminating assignment. Their culminating project should invite them to exercise their knowledge of all ENG 201/H outcomes.

4. Reflection (1-2 pages) on how work meets course outcomes

The composition program will provide a common prompt to help guide students' reflections. The reflection is important for helping assessors characterize students' awareness and meta-knowledge of course learning outcomes as they apply to students' own writing. The reflection should be included in every ENG 201 course as part of the culminating assignment.

How Will Artifacts Be Submitted?

1. Instructors must create an assignment module for the culminating assignment in MUOnline and "align" the ENG 201/H outcomes with the assignment. *Further handouts and workshops will be provided to assist with this requirement.*

2. Students should combine the four (4) artifacts above into a single Word document or PDF and upload their work to the corresponding assignment module. The work students submit for assessment will not interfere with instructors' grading in MUOnline, and the same document may be independently graded by instructors as well as used for program assessment purposes.
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ENG 201/H--Student Reflection for Composition Program Assessment

Students enrolled in ENG 201 should complete a 1-2 page, double-spaced reflection on their learning within the framework of the course objectives. Instructors should provide this assignment to students and direct them to turn in this reflection with their ENG 201 culminating assignment.

Dear ENG 201 Student,

Please complete this 1-2 page, double-spaced reflection as part of the Composition Program's efforts to assess student learning in our composition sequence. You should follow the following prompt when crafting your reflection:

- A. **Review the ENG 201 course objectives, which were provided to you in the course syllabus at the start of the semester.**

By the end of English 201, students will:

1. Demonstrate rhetorical knowledge across contexts and audiences.
2. Develop writing projects through multiple drafts.
3. Apply knowledge of information literacy and ethical citation practices.
4. Apply knowledge of sentence-level mechanics and usage.

- B. **Reflection Consideration Part #1: Describe how your culminating artifact fulfills the learning objectives of the course. How does your work reflect the culminating abilities outlined above?** For example, in your description, point to specific writing in your culminating artifact that demonstrates your application of rhetorical choices and knowledge (1), revision strategies (2), information literacy and ethical citation practices (3), and attention to sentence-level mechanics and usage (4). In your reflection, you may compare the work of your initial draft to your final draft, as both documents should be included in your assignment upload.
- C. **Reflection Consideration Part #2: Describe the overall strengths and weaknesses of your culminating artifact in light of the course objectives. What did you do particularly well and what aspects of the learning objectives remain challenging for you?**

Assignment Template for ENG 201/H Culminating Project

Timetable and Submission Guidelines (Learning Outcome 2)

- Are drafts expected? Peer review? Conferences? Include the various tasks and due dates on which students' success depends.
 - How should students submit their work? On paper? Electronically? In a portfolio?
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Goals/Purpose

- How does the assignment fit in with the larger course goals?
 - What practices and skills do you want students to engage in?
 - What, *exactly*, do you want students to accomplish in their papers?
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Rhetorical Context (Learning Outcome 1)

- What is the rhetorical situation of the assignment?
 - What audience are students trying to reach with their writing?
 - What role should students assume as writers?
 - What stance do you expect the students to assume in relation to their audience?
 - How should students craft their language for this audience?
 - What is the genre? What are the constraints and allowances of this genre? What should the paper look like to meet genre conventions?
 - Will outside texts, informational and otherwise, play a role in how the text is crafted?
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Information Literacy and Citation Conventions (Learning Outcome 3)

- What standards will students use to select and critically analyze the sources used in their culminating artifact?
- How will students compose their texts using evidence from sources?
- What citation conventions should students use in their culminating artifact?

NOTE: It is advisable that instructors require students to incorporate a variety of credible texts in their culminating artifacts. As with last year, the use of 5-8 sources, at a minimum, seems to be a satisfactory standard.

Usage Conventions (Learning Outcome 4)

- What grammar and usage conventions do you expect from students?
 - How are required usage conventions appropriate for the assignment's rhetorical situation?
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Assessment

- How does this assignment factor into students' course grade?
 - How will this text be graded? Is there a rubric? Does the rubric mirror the language of the assignment?
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Process (Learning Outcome 2)

- How should students proceed in fulfilling the assignment goals? Are there particular strategies that might be useful?
- What are the necessary steps for successfully completing the assignment?