



**Middle Tennessee State University
General Education Competencies
Assessment Report 2015-16**

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year 2015-2016

Subject Area: Mathematics

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.
 - MATH 1710 – College Algebra
 - MATH 1710K – College Algebra
2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.
 - A total of 1,531 students were assessed in the academic year (1,072 in fall 2015 and 459 in spring 2016). Results of all students who took the departmental final examination were used in the assessment.
3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.
 - There were no changes from previous assessments. The procedures used are the same as used in the 2011 – 2015 reports. Each of the five learning outcomes for mathematics is associated with a specific set of questions on the final examination—40 questions for learning outcome 1; 16 questions for each of learning outcomes 2, 3, and 4; and 12 questions for learning outcome 5.

The same set of questions was used to assess both Learning Outcome 2 (real-life problems) and Learning Outcome 3 (meaningful connections), as the distinction between these two learning outcomes was too subtle to measure with a single examination.

A correct response rate of:

- At least 85% is deemed superior,
- Between 60% and 84%, inclusive, is deemed satisfactory, and
- Less than 60% is deemed unsatisfactory.

Mathematics Learning Outcome to be Assessed	Test Used	Test Item Numbers
Learning Outcome 1: Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions ALL (1-40)
Learning Outcome 2: Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 2,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,32,37
Learning Outcome 3: Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 2,3,4,6,7,8,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,32,37
Learning Outcome 4: Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 16) 2,3,4,7,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,20,27,37
Learning Outcome 5: Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions (total = 12) 1,5,6,7,11,12,14,25,28,29,31,39

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell.

Mathematics Learning Outcomes, Academic Year 2015-16

N = 1,531

Mathematics Outcome to be Assessed	Superior	Satisfactory	Superior or Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
	# and %	# and %	# and %	# and %
1. Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	n=256 (16.7%)	n=833 (54.4%)	n=1089 (71.1%)	n=442 (28.9%)
2. Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	n=216 (14.1%)	n=785 (51.3%)	n=1001 (65.4%)	n=530 (34.6%)
3. Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	n=216 (14.1%)	n=785 (51.3%)	n=1001 (65.4%)	n=530 (34.6%)
4. Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	n=257 (16.8%)	n=795 (51.9%)	n=1052 (68.7%)	n=479 (31.3%)
5. Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	n=447 (29.2%)	n=799 (52.2%)	n=1246 (81.4%)	n=285 (18.6%)

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

The table below shows results of AY 2015-2016 for percentages of unsatisfactory responses on each of the five TBR mathematics learning outcomes compared to data from three previous academic years:

TBR Mathematics Learning Outcomes	% Unsatisfactory AY 2012-2013	% Unsatisfactory AY 2013-2014	% Unsatisfactory AY 2014-2015	% Unsatisfactory AY 2015-2016
Outcome 1	27.5	25.5	25.7	28.9%
Outcome 2	37.7	35.1	35.5	34.6%
Outcome 3	37.7	35.1	35.5	34.6%
Outcome 4	28.4	26.6	26.6	31.3%
Outcome 5	19.5	16.8	17.9	18.6%

Analyzing the data, we found particularly low percentages of correct responses for questions 4, 16, and 18. All three of these questions are assessed for Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4. For the AY 2015-2016, the weighted averages for Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4 are 67.5%, 65.8%, 65.8%, and 67.2%, respectively. This compares to a 76.7% weighted average for Learning Outcome 5, which does not include these three questions in its assessment. This pattern is also shown in the much lower percentages of Unsatisfactory responses for Outcome 5 compared to the other four learning outcomes. The committee will investigate Questions 4, 16, and 18 of the final examination to determine whether these questions are faulty in some way(s).

Students are placed in K-sections (prescribed enhanced sections) based on a Math ACT score of 17 or 18, and students are placed in non-K-sections with a Math ACT score of 19 or better. This assessment combines the results of all students (both K- and non-K-sections), so that the average math ACT score of the student population in MATH 1710 is certainly less than the ACT Test Benchmark of 22 set as the benchmark for “a high probability of success” in College Algebra (<http://www.act.org/research>). Less than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22.

Extra support for students enrolled in K-sections includes the tenured and tenure-track faculty from University Studies who consistently teach the majority of the K-sections of MATH 1710. These students also receive extra time each week for classroom instruction, as well as the use of online programs to supplement with helping students to be more consistent in completing homework assignments. These efforts have been successful as indicated by studies consistently showing no significant difference in the final examination results when K- and non-K-sections are compared.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

Several strategies have been taken to provide a more consistent program for general education courses—

- The Committee created common departmental syllabi and common course schedules listing topics to cover for all instructors of MATH 1710 (also for MATH 1010, MATH 1530, MATH 1630, & MATH 1810).
- All faculty members are instructed to keep accurate attendance records on each student to document D-F-W grades and to encourage students to attend classes.
- Faculty members are instructed to utilize the University's Academic Alert System early and throughout the semester to notify students who are in academic jeopardy.
- Students are encouraged to use all available resources to receive tutoring and help with classwork. Syllabus includes link to Tutoring Center in James Walker Library.
- The department's MS GTAs are currently supervised by Dr. Rebecca Calahan. Supervision of GTAs in the Ph.D. program and the COMPS program is assigned to Dr. Angie Murdock. In supervising the teaching assistants, these faculty members provide teaching mentoring, help with instructional practices, scheduling of workloads, and oversight of University and Departmental requirements in the programs of the graduate students.
- Fewer than one-quarter of College Algebra students present an ACT Math score as high as 22, the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for a 75% chance of passing College Algebra with a C or better.
- In the Department of Mathematical Sciences, College Algebra is taught almost entirely by full-time temporary instructors, adjunct instructors, and GTAs.
 - ❖ In F2015, 51 on-campus sections were taught (26-K sections & 25-non K sections) by 26 different faculty members. For the 25 non-K sections, only one section was taught by a tenured faculty member; for the 26 K sections, 13 were taught by tenured faculty.

- ❖ In S2016, 28 on-campus sections were taught (17-K sections & 11-non K sections). The non-K sections were taught by 8 different faculty members and no section was taught by a tenured faculty member; for the 17 K sections, 9 were taught by tenured faculty.
 - Because of an inherently higher turn-over rate for non-tenured and non-tenured faculty, the Department continues to request more tenure-track faculty lines to meet the needs of the student population enrolling in MATH 1710 to satisfy general education requirements.
7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments? If yes, please explain.
- In order to insure greater uniformity in syllabi, grading, and learning expectations, all instructors are now required to have common information on syllabi and to use the same grading scale ranges.
 - A significant goal of the Department is to develop course communities, also called professional communities, of faculty for its Gen Ed courses. MATH 1530 and MATH 1810 are examples of courses that have formed these communities where faculty teaching the courses meet on a regular basis to share and plan for ways to improve student learning in these courses. As proposed in the redesign of MATH 1710, this is also a goal for providing coherence across the multiple sections of College Algebra. Note: The redesign was put on hold due to the Focus Act and consequent uncertainties with regard to course transfer between institutions.
 - The Department of Mathematical Sciences and the Department of University Studies both continue to provide free tutoring to students in all General Education Mathematics courses. In support of the University's Quest for Student Success, last spring the General Education tutoring operation for MATH 1010, 1410, 1420, 1530, 1630, and 1710 was relocated to the Walker Library, extending tutoring services into the evening and weekend hours. The Mathematics Department continues to offer tutoring in Calculus and Pre-calculus in KOM. The University Studies Department offers tutoring for MATH 1010-K, 1710-K, and 1530-K in the SAG building.
- University Studies offers a program called Academic Intervention in Mathematics (AIM) to promote success for those highly at-risk students who are repeating prescribed General Education mathematics courses. AIM targets students who have failed the course in which they are enrolled. These at-risk students are identified for each instructor at the beginning of the semester. The instructor meets with each student periodically to advise, to encourage, to teach study skills, and to individualize other interventions. Interventions may include assignments of time to be spent in the math lab, notebook checks, or written assignments. Simply meeting with students to show concern for them and to build relationships with them is a proven retention tool. Students are encouraged to meet with instructors during

office hours. Instructors also use phone calls, emails, and Advisor Alerts to contact students who are not attending class. It is obvious that this type of intervention would be helpful to other students, so instructors intervene when any student is not progressing well. Any intervention that is designed for repeating students is also available to non-repeaters. For students who have missed a class or for tutors who might need to review some course topic(s), videos from the online 1710K are made available for viewing with all students and all faculty given access.

- In order to identify actions and strategies to improve student achievement, assessment results are provided and shared with faculty in Mathematical Sciences, faculty in University Studies, and members of the Mathematics General Education Committee.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year 2015-2016

Subject Area: Oral Communication

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

The course Fundamentals of Communication, COMM 2200, was used in the assessment of Oral Communication. To evaluate student performance in constructing and delivering an oral presentation, Persuasive Speech Oral Presentations were assessed.

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

There were 72 sections of COMM 2200 offered in the spring 2016 semester, with a total of 1644 students. Each instructor of COMM 2200 was asked to film all of the persuasive speeches in their first three sections. Thus, if a faculty member taught two classes on MWF and three classes on TR, the faculty member would record all of the persuasive speeches given in their two MWF classes and the first class of the TR sections. All persuasive speeches in each of those sections were recorded. There was a total of 320 speech videos (19.4%).

Once the speeches were recorded, they were uploaded to an MTSU dropbox account, set up specifically for the COMM 2200 assessment. From this list of speeches, the assessment coordinator used a random number generator and randomly sampled every other speech video. These speeches were uploaded to a separate folder and were renamed with a number so as not to reflect the instructor of the course. There were several videos (15 total) where the sound quality was not good or the video was cut short, and those videos were taken out of the pool to be chosen for evaluation. The evaluators assessed 150 videos.

Training for the faculty members serving as evaluators consisted of one hour of training per evaluator to re-familiarize each evaluator with the rubrics and rating systems. Three full-time temporary faculty members served as evaluators in 2016. All three evaluated the oral presentations from the year prior.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from the pilot assessment? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

The number of participants was the similar to the pilot study, which sampled 10%. The sampled speeches for the 2016 assessment was 9.4% of total enrollment for the class. The sample is less than 10%, but this is due to the fact that several of the videos were not acceptable for evaluation.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for oral communication. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

TABLES (2016)

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)	Total Score
<p>TBR Outcome I: <u>Competency One:</u> Within the opening segment of the speech the speaker meets the four criteria for an effective opening [1. the introduction gains the audience's attention; 2. the thesis / purpose statement is clear and concise, 3. the purpose is appropriate for a persuasive presentation, and 4.the speaker clearly relates the topic to the members of the audience]; and the opening segment is adequately developed.</p> <p>Average score: $M = 2.949$ (N=150)</p>	<p>Within the opening segment the speaker fails to meet all four criteria and/or the opening segment is missing.</p> <p>12 (8%)</p>	<p>Within the opening segment the speaker only meets two of the four criteria and/or the opening segment is severely under developed.</p> <p>28(18.6%)</p>	<p>Within the opening segment the speaker meets three of the four criteria; and the opening segment lacks some development.</p> <p>43 (28.7%)</p>	<p>Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening section may contain minor flaws in development.</p> <p>36 (24%)</p>	<p>Within the opening segment the speaker meets all four criteria; the opening segment is fully developed.</p> <p>31 (20.7%)</p>	
<p>TBR Outcome II: <u>Competency Two:</u> The speaker uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation.</p> <p>Average score: $M = 2.898$ (N=150)</p>	<p>The speech is clearly not persuasive and/or fails to effectively use a persuasive organizational pattern that is appropriate for the topic, and audience.</p> <p>10 (6.3%)</p>	<p>The speech is somewhat persuasive and/or the organizational pattern and expression of arguments are severely deficient [the organizational pattern is unclear and/or incomplete].</p> <p>39 (26%)</p>	<p>The speech is persuasive; the speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern with some errors or omissions, and some arguments may be deficient</p> <p>33 (22%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern. The organizational pattern is complete, and the speaker leaves the audience with a clear persuasive message or call to action.</p> <p>46 (30.7%)</p>	<p>The speech is clearly persuasive and the speaker presents an exceptionally clear and compelling argument or case. The organizational pattern is complete and the speaker leaves the audience with an undeniable message or call to action.</p> <p>22 (14.7%)</p>	
<p>TBR Outcome III. <u>Competency Three:</u> The speaker provides supporting material (examples, statistics and testimony) appropriate for a persuasive presentation; the quality and variety of support clearly enhances the credibility of the speech and source credibility is clearly established.</p> <p>Average score: $M = 2.891$ (N=150)</p>	<p>The speaker uses no supporting material</p> <p>7 (4.7%)</p>	<p>The speaker's use of support material is lacking in variety, and/or is lacking in quality and/or quantity; source credibility is not established.</p> <p>34 (22.7%)</p>	<p>The speaker's use of support material is adequate but is somewhat deficient [may be lacking in quality and/or quantity; source credibility is not established].</p> <p>47 (31.3%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality, quantity and variety; source credibility may not always be established.</p> <p>42 (28%)</p>	<p>The speaker's use of support material is exceptional; utilizes all three kinds of support material, the quality and variety of support clearly enhances credibility of the speech and source credibility is clearly established.</p> <p>20 (13.3%)</p>	

ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric	Severely Deficient (1/A)	Inadequate (2/B)	Fair (3/C)	Good (4/D)	Excellent (5/E)	Total Score
<p>TBR Outcome IV: <u>Competency Four:</u> The speaker uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion. Language is persuasive. Correct grammar, diction, and syntax are used.</p> <p>Average score: $M = 3.062$ (N=150)</p>	<p>The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and for the audience; the language is sexist, racist, non-inclusive, etc. Grammar and pronunciation are incorrect and/or distracting.</p> <p>6 (4%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses unclear language and/or uses jargon and/or slang that is inappropriate for a formal occasion and/or distracts from the presentation. The language attempts to be persuasive but sounds more informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are not effective.</p> <p>13 (8.6%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear and appropriate for a formal occasion. The speaker uses an occasional slang expression or jargon, but such language is not distracting. The language is persuasive to an extent but borders on informative. Grammar, syntax, and diction are effective.</p> <p>61 (40.7%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is clear, vivid, and appropriate. The presentation is devoid of inappropriate slang or jargon. Language is persuasive throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points.</p> <p>54 (36%)</p>	<p>The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, appropriate, and the speaker uses parallel sentence structure and/or repetition etc. Language is persuasive, compelling, and clear throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points.</p> <p>16 (10.7%)</p>	
<p>TBR Outcome V: <u>Competency Five:</u> The speaker demonstrates the ability to effectively utilize material gathered from multiple sources.</p> <p>Average score: $M = 2.713$ (N=150)</p>	<p>The speaker fails to include any source documentation in the presentation.</p> <p>16 (10.7%)</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a few sources in the presentation but the documentation is deficient [five or fewer sources cited and/or a variety of sources are not used and/or some sources do not appear to be credible].</p> <p>62 (41.3%)</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of four sources in the presentation and the sources appear to be credible, but the documentation is deficient [a variety of sources is not used and/or source credibility is not always established].</p> <p>21 (14%)</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of four sources in the presentation; the sources appear to be credible, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient [a variety of sources is utilized].</p> <p>15 (1%)</p>	<p>The speaker incorporates more than four sources in the presentation; the sources are clearly credible, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient.</p> <p>36 (24%)</p>	

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

Outcome I: Articulation of a Purpose Statement. Results remain good, with 73% of students scoring from Fair to Excellent on the oral assessment (Fair 28.7%, Good 24%, and Excellent 20.7%). In 2015, 92% of students scored Fair to Excellent on the oral assessment.

The majority of students are articulating the purpose statement adequately. Similar to 2015, the data fell in a normal bell curve. While we are two percentage points lower, the normal distribution indicates that we are where we need to be in this area. We will monitor this in future assessments to ensure that a declining pattern is not developing.

Outcome II: The Ordering of Main Points in a reasonable and convincing manner. Performance increased in this area from the previous year. In 2016, 67% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 22%, Good 30.7%, Excellent 14.7%). In 2015, 42% of students scored between Fair and Excellent on ordering main points (Fair 18%, Good, 16%, Excellent 8%), and 58% of students scored Severely Deficient to Inadequate.

Outcome III: use of appropriate supporting material for a persuasive presentation. Performance on the use of supporting materials also improved from 2015, with 72% of students scoring between Fair and Excellent (Fair 31.3%, Good, 28%, Excellent 13.3%). In 2015, 68% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 29%, Good 32%, Excellent 7%).

Outcome IV: diction, syntax, usage, grammar, mechanics. Again, performance in this area increased. In 2016, 87% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 40.7%, Good 36%, Excellent 10.7%). This is an improvement from 2015, where 80% of students scored between Fair and Excellent (Fair 50%, Good 28%, Excellent 2%) when speaking.

Outcome V: the gathering and use of multiple sources. The outcome shows a decline from 2015. In 2016, 48% of students scored at the satisfactory level (Fair 14%; Good 1%; 24% Excellent); in 2015, 57% of students scored Fair to Excellent (Fair 9%, Good 9%, Excellent 39%).

The scores on this outcome are concerning. One thing that changed between 2015 and 2016 was at the beginning of semester meetings, we did not have the librarians come and give a presentation. Several faculty members still used the library and scheduled demonstrations for their classes, but we may need to consider implementing that strategy again for future semesters to see if it can impact the assessment scores in this area.

Overall Interpretation and Analysis

Overall, the data suggest some improvements and some declines for COMM 2200. We improved in Outcomes II, III, and IV, and the decline was only slight in Outcome I. In Outcomes I- III, the data fell in a normal bell curve. This suggests that the results are where they need be and are likely an accurate reflection of the students in the class.

Outcome IV was positively skewed, which we were very happy to see because it indicates that students grasp the concept of using appropriate language for speaking well. However, with Outcome V, the use of a variety of supporting materials, the data were negatively skewed, which is concerning. Some possible reasons for this are that some students are only doing Internet research and citing websites because they are readily available. Another possible reason for this decline could be that the department stopped inviting the MTSU librarians to give a presentation in the beginning of the semester meeting. Instructors were encouraged to continue to use the library and to schedule demonstrations on their own and for their individual classes instead. Perhaps bringing back this presentation could help with this outcome as well. In addition, we changed the number of sources students need for their persuasive speech from six to four. While

this was supposed to help students find better sources, it could have been viewed as the faculty becoming more lenient on sources rather than as means to ensure that students used better sources instead of using more.

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

In fall 2016, a new faculty member, Andrew Dix, will be taking on the COMM 2200 Assessment process. He will help instructors and adjuncts with declining numbers in Outcomes I and V.

We will continue to work closely with the MTSU Writing Center and with the MTSU library staff to create additional class materials to assist COMM 2200 students.

Overall, COMM 2200 is a successful class. However, we see several opportunities for improvement for the future of the course. These include the following:

- We have begun to change the COMM 2200 curriculum in terms of what is expected on speech requirements. These modifications are more in-line with the National Communication Association's recommendations for the Basic Course. Andrew Dix will work with the new department chair of Communication Studies and Organizational Communication, Heather Hundley, to address curriculum issues.
- In addition, we would like to see the development of a Speaking Center. We previously had a Speaking Center, where students could get help writing and practicing their speeches. However, due to location and lack of funding, we had to close it. We asked for funds to re-establish the center, but we were turned down. We would like to continue to ask for internal funding and perhaps look to external resources as well. This would help address Outcomes I and V. The Speaking Center could clarify what a purpose statement is and help students develop one that is clear and concise. In addition, if the Speaking Center were located in the library, as it was before this could help students with finding good sources for their speeches, since those working in the speaking center could refer students directly to librarians for help with speeches.
- Moreover, the assessment process still needs work. We need to change what is being measured, as the current guidelines do not adequately meet criteria for effective speech making. For example, the current outcomes do not measure the effectiveness of the introduction or the effectiveness of the conclusion of a speech, both of which are incredibly important in the speaking concept.
- Additionally, the assessment process needs work in how speeches are sampled and recorded. Instructors struggled with having the adequate equipment to record speeches. The department only had 3 cameras for the entire faculty to use for assessment. This is not enough. We need to equip our instructors with the technology they need. Currently, we do not have an answer to this issue, but we will continue to seek out technology funding through various agencies.
- Similarly, the success of this assessment project depends on the utilization of well-trained and appropriately compensated evaluators. Faculty members involved in assessing the materials for this project should continue to receive financial compensation for the work they do during the summer. However, since we would like to eliminate the outline portion of the assessment, we would like to redistribute those funds to the evaluators of the speech videos. Those evaluators have to watch at least 115, 4-6 minute speeches, and since they are looking for specific criteria, they often have to watch them several times.

Each evaluator must watch each speech, and this takes up a lot of time. We would like to see the funds used for paying the evaluators of the outline component be given to the speaking evaluators. The person overseeing the assessment along with faculty responsible for tabulating the results of the assessment should also continue to receive financial compensation for the additional work that must be done during the summer.

- We would also like to start utilizing this class as a means to conduct Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) research. With the assessment data, there are myriad possibilities with this course to examine effective teaching strategies. We are working with Tom Brinthaup in the LT&ITC to conduct this research. This data could particularly help us understand falling numbers in Outcomes I and V, for the technology components of the course could help students understand purpose statements and finding research for speeches in ways outside of the classroom.
- Likewise, we would like to see technology be used more in the classroom to help students with their skills. One of the most valuable assignments students can complete is evaluating a video of the speech they delivered in class. We would like to learn what resources are available to have all students record their speeches to help them become more competent and confident speakers. The director of assessment and the department chair will work with ITD regarding this issue.
- Furthermore, we would like to see instructors of the course embrace Experiential Learning (EXL) and MT Engage. Experiential Learning can be a very valuable tool for students, as it helps them apply the skills they have learned in the class to real-world situations. It can also increase learning by bringing in a reflective component to class. We have had several faculty members embrace both EXL and MT Engage for their classes, and we will continue to support this behavior. We are going to encourage instructors to try and utilize EXL to help with outcomes I and V. This could mean developing an EXL assignment designed to find appropriate sources for their speech. This will help students see the applicability of finding good sources, which can then help them in the classroom.
- Currently, COMM 2200 sections are being capped at a 26:1 student/faculty ratio, an increase from the previous semesters of 25:1. After an examination of current curriculum in the department, we have determined that most faculty would prefer a cap of 25. We are moving to cap each section at 25. This can help with the falling scores in Outcomes I and V, as faculty will have more time to work with students individually on their speeches.

7. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?

Since fall 2011, at least two workshops have been conducted for all COMM 2200 instructors each academic year. During these workshops instructors have an opportunity to discuss and develop specific strategies for improving instruction on all the competencies, with special focus on those areas where students continue to fall below the satisfactory level of competence. However, starting in the fall 2015 semester, we convened COMM 2200 instructors once a month to share best teaching practices and build community. This helped faculty with any issues that they are facing. Meetings were well attended, and we discussed several topics, including civil discourse initiatives, strategies to help with the current DFW rate, accessibility, and classroom management practices.

We also held a workshop regarding creating accessible syllabi and course documents for faculty. Faculty were shown how to ensure that their documents in their classes could be accessed by

those with various disabilities. In fall 2016, all COMM 2200 faculty had accessible syllabi for their courses.

The current director, Andrew Dix, is meeting with Jason Vance in the library to work on and develop curriculum to help students with their research. They have already met twice to discuss possibilities to improve scores for outcome V.

The previous director of assessment also gave faculty members templates for syllabi and schedules that were accessible but also provided clear policies for faculty to use.

We have also provided resources for faculty regarding utilizing experiential learning in their classrooms. Two instructors who used EXL activities in their classes have shared their ideas with faculty regarding how to turn their classes into EXL classes. The previous director filled out an EXL application and sent it to the COMM 2200 faculty to help them start the process of applying for EXL credit. Several sections of the class have now adopted an EXL assignment and have had their sections designated as EXL.

We also have several instructors implementing MT Engage for their classes this semester, including the creation of an online portfolio. Since this is the first semester we have had this, we will have to wait for feedback, but we hope it will be positive.

We will continue to work closely with the library staff and the writing center staff. We will also continue to seek funding to reopen the speaking center.

Tutoring for students preparing oral presentations continues to be offered in the MTSU library tutoring center.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year 2015-2016

Subject Area: Writing

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment.

ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

Population

The sample of students whose essays were evaluated for this assessment was drawn from the population of all the students enrolled in a section of ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing in Spring 2016. The population consisted of 2,149 students.

Sampling

A random sample of 123 students was drawn from the population in early April, 2016 using www.randomizer.org. The students' 1020 instructors were instructed to submit in May to the department the most researched essay written by these students in ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing. Of the 123 students in the sample, 112 completed the course and submitted their final essays to the department for this assessment. The 112 essays were numbered and anonymized for both student-author and instructor. Of the 112 submitted essays, 104 were traditional argumentative essays and served as the sample of essays scored for this assessment.

To ensure that the random sample of 104 students was representative of the population of 2,149 students, we conducted chi square analyses to evaluate possible statistical differences between the sample and the population distributions of final grades in ENGL 1020. We limited this comparison to the distributions for grades A through D, eliminating the grades N and F from the calculation given the assumption that there are many reasons a student might fail a class beyond merely not performing well in the class, e.g., not attending. The two grade distributions were statistically similar, $\chi^2 = 2.18$, $p = .90$. The average final grade of the population in ENGL 1020 in Spring 2016 was 3.0, and the average final grade of the sample was 2.9 (see Appendix A).

Scoring

Twelve English department faculty members representing the six faculty ranks in the department (GTA, adjunct instructor, full-time temporary lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor)¹ were recruited to score the essays. Following a three-hour grade norming session led by the department's Assessment Coordinator, the scorers received 17-18 essays each to score independently over a period of six weeks. Each essay in the sample received two separate scores from two different readers on each of six criteria (see Appendix A). Each reader received a \$125 stipend.

Cut off scores

The following mean cut-off scores were used in this assessment (see Table 1).²

¹ The department had only one faculty member at the rank of Assistant Professor. We, therefore, recruited a third Associate Professor.

² The cut off points were approved by the English department during its monthly meeting of Tenured and Tenure-Track faculty on September 9, 2015.

	Superior	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Grade	A, B	C	D, F
Score	5, 4.5, 4	3.5, 3, 2.5	2, 1.5, 1

Table 1. Score range by category

The department’s **rationale** for setting 2.5 as the floor of the satisfactory range was that it represents a score higher than the maximum of 2 points which represented the grade of D in our scoring rubric. In addition, a score of 2.5 (which was largely the mean of a score of 2 and a score of 3) reflects that at least one of two readers considered the student’s performance satisfactory on that criterion/outcome.

Interrater reliability

Given multiple scorers, we evaluated interrater reliability by intraclass correlation (ICC) (see Table 2). Highly significant intraclass correlations characterize this year’s assessment in contrast to the 2015 assessment. We attribute this marked improvement in interrater reliability to the development of the detailed scoring rubric, a process which was initiated by the Assessment Coordinator and relied on a draft created by Dr. Jim Comas followed by a grade-norming session on June 15, 2106, during which the committee of scorers collaborated in revising and finalizing the rubric (see 3 below).

	ICC 2015	ICC 2016
Outcome A	.441*	.371*
Outcome B	.462**	.448**
Outcome C	.114	.646**
Outcome D	.276	.648**
Outcome E	.292*	.523**
Outcome F	.347*	.701**

Table 2. Intraclass correlation coefficients (* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.001$)

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant changes from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

The 2016 assessment cycle followed all the procedures established during the 2015 assessment cycle.³

In addition, the scoring rubric was elaborated by the 2016 Assessment Committee⁴ to include descriptors for each level of performance for each criterion. A draft was developed by Drs. Aleka

³ Please note that the assessment process was modified in AY 2014-15. Specifically, in earlier years, the scoring rubric involved a 3-point scoring scale (Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Superior). Starting in AY 2014-15, the department changed the rubric to a 5-point scale because the psychometric literature suggests that a 3-point scale does not provide enough points of discrimination (Nunnally, 1978) , and if there are not enough responses to choose from, readers are forced to use the next best alternative, introducing measurement error. In fact, some studies suggest that a 7-point scale is slightly better in this regard than a 5-point scale. Given that faculty are used to the 5-point grading scale (A, B, C, D, F), we moved to a 5-point scale starting with the 2015 assessment. We believe that the significant improvements reflected in the 2015/2016 scores as compared to the 2013/2014 scores is a result of the change to the 5-point scale which allowed scorers to discriminate more effectively around the middle value.

⁴ The Assessment Committee consisted of the department’s Assessment Coordinator and the 12 faculty who served as scorers in the 2016 assessment cycle.

Blackwell and James Comas, and the proposed rubric was discussed and revised by the Assessment Committee during its grade norming session on June 15, 2016. For each outcome, the levels of performance were finalized once the committee discussed them and reached agreement.

Finally, the committee decided to eliminate one of the MTSU-specific criteria (i.e., the student writer has written 1,000 words) because it does not provide the department with valuable information for designing instruction or curriculum.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report.

Better (↑) or Worse (↓)	Writing Outcomes	Year	Superior	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
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A ↑	<i>The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.</i>	2013	9%	55.5%	35.5%
		2014	6.1%	53.5%	40.5%
		2015	6%	66%	28%
		2016	24%	64%	12%

B ↑	<i>The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.</i>	2013	9.5%	55.5%	35%
		2014	3.9%	44.4%	51.7%
		2015	8%	68%	24%
		2016	16.5%	72.8%	10.7%

C ↑	<i>The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.</i>	2013	11%	44%	45%
		2014	3.3%	44.4%	52.2%
		2015	3%	68%	29%
		2016	19%	65%	16%

D ↑	<i>Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison, contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).</i>	2013	10%	61%	29%
		2014	6.7%	55%	38.3%
		2015	5%	79%	16%
		2016	17.5%	68%	14.6%

E ↑	<i>The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.</i>	2013	10%	47%	43%
		2014	2.8%	54.4%	42.8%
		2015	5%	69%	26%
		2016	13.6%	68%	18.4%

F ↑	<i>Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</i>	2013	8%	53.5%	38.5%
		2014	2.8%	46.1%	51.1%
		2015	0%	66%	34%
		2016	19.4%	53.4%	27.2%

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

The 2016 writing assessment results show large improvements in student attainment of all learning outcomes compared to 2015 (see Figure 1). These improvements are reflected in both (i) a decrease in the proportion of students performing at the unsatisfactory level, ranging from a 1% decrease to a 16% decrease ($M = 9.6\%$), and (ii) large increases in the proportion of students performing at the superior level, ranging from an 8.5% increase to a 19.4% increase ($M = 13.8\%$). Chi-square analyses revealed that the improvements observed in three learning outcomes (Outcomes A, B, and C) are statistically significant. By contrast, with 27.2% of the sample underperforming, outcome F (*Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.*) is a learning outcome which seems to require more focused attention by the department.

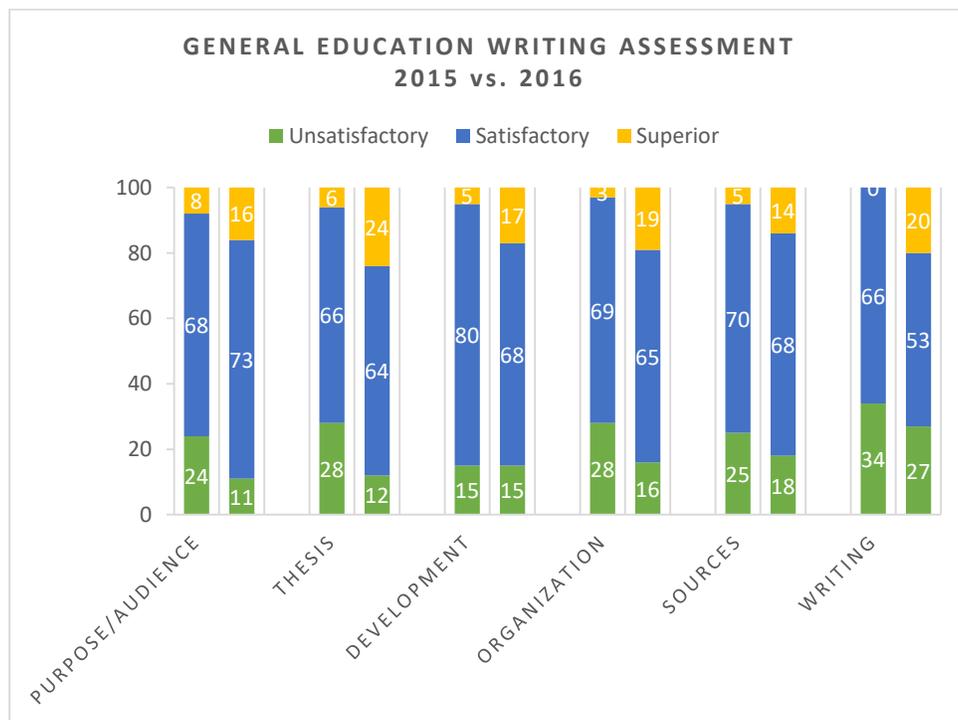


Fig. 1. Bar graph of proportional distribution of sample scores by outcome (left bar = 2015; right bar = 2016)

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

The MTSU English department has implemented a number of successful initiatives (see Item 7). Most importantly, the department is deeply committed to excellence in its writing program, and this year's

assessment results reflect that commitment. We believe a number of factors have contributed to the observed improvements in outcomes:

- a. Thanks to the continued support of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the University Provost, the department has been able to limit enrollment in its General Education writing courses to 20 students in line with the *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* advocated by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting>). Enrollment caps are a significant variable in writing achievement because enrollment caps in writing intensive courses create opportunities for more individualized feedback during the writing process and ensure more rapid and detailed evaluation of students' writing.
- b. Thanks to support from the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the Provost, the department has been able to fill two tenure-track positions in Writing and Rhetoric in the last two years: Dr. Kate Pantelides joined the department last fall, and Dr. Eric Detweiler joined the department this fall.
- c. The department is continually exploring ways to continue improving its General Education courses. For example, the department is currently experimenting with a new administrative model for its Lower Division English courses for AY 16-17 with two co-directors of Lower Division (in contrast to the prior model which consisted of one faculty member serving as the Lower Division director and one faculty member serving as the GTA coordinator).

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from previous assessments?

The English department has implemented a number of initiatives, which may largely, in fact, be responsible for the significant improvement in scores we observed in this most recent assessment cycles.

Curriculum-related initiatives

1. The department adopted a new curriculum for **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** with a focus on Literacy for Life to better prepare students to transfer writing and thinking skills to other general education courses, courses in their majors, and the workforce. This revised curriculum was designed to better prepare students for the rigors of **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**.
2. The department revised the **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** curriculum to be more closely aligned with the General Education Outcomes related to writing. The revised course is a research and argumentative course that focuses on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), rather than one that focuses on literary analysis, to stimulate more student interest and more student experience in research and argumentation. The Lower Division Committee selected textbooks with a Writing Across the Curriculum focus for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**, as well as new handbooks for both **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** and **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** to emphasize the distinctions between the two courses.
3. The department added a required library visit (with a librarian-led introduction to conducting research) to all sections of **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** in order to improve student performance specifically in relation to Outcome E.
4. The department has further customized the new handbooks for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** to emphasize the course objectives, the General Education Learning Outcomes, and the resources available to MTSU students specifically. Dr. Jason Vance, Information Literacy Librarian, contributed customized screen shots of library search engines that are particular to this university to be included in the handbook developed for **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**, *Research Matters at MTSU*.

5. English department faculty participated in a campus-wide General Education course redesign initiative to adopt high student-engagement pedagogies as a technique to improve student success. Under the umbrella of this larger initiative, **ENGL 1010 Expository Writing** was redesigned in 2013-14. **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing** was redesigned in AY 2015-2016 and the redesigned course is currently being piloted in 11 sections of ENGL 1020 in Spring 2016.

Instruction-related Initiatives

1. The department now provides intensive oversight of its General Education faculty. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department.
2. Tenured and TT faculty in the department are now explicitly required to teach at least one section of lower division courses each semester, including **ENGL 1020 Research and Argumentative Writing**.
3. The department has created two new web pages—*General Education Faculty Resources* and *Lower Division FAQs*—which include the course objectives, teaching and learning objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for General Education faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in General Education English.
4. The department's Lower Division Director has been conducting regular "syllabus reviews" during which the syllabi of GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors are reviewed and evaluated. During this review, when appropriate, the Lower Division Director encourages more required reading and additional reading instruction in both ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020, as well as more classroom workshops and peer review opportunities.
5. The department has created opportunities for professional development for adjuncts and full-time instructors by establishing an MTSU Foundation account with grant monies donated by Bedford/St. Martin's, publisher of the department's ENGL 1010 handbook, *Easy Writer*, and McGraw-Hill, publisher of the department's 1020 handbook, *Research Matters at MTSU*. Faculty are encouraged to apply for professional development grants and information about conferences, workshops, and seminars is disseminated via the faculty listserv.
6. The Lower Division Director and GTA coordinator have been organizing regular essay grade norming sessions for adjuncts, instructors, and GTAs.
7. The department has instituted "Lower Division Curriculum Meetings" which are held before the beginning of each fall and spring semester. These meetings are day-long conferences with whole-group presentations and break-out sessions. Faculty from the department submit proposals to present at these meetings. Approximately 70 faculty members have attended these meetings each semester.
8. The department is experimenting with a new administrative model for its Lower Division English courses for AY 16-17 with two co-directors of Lower Division (in contrast to the prior model which consisted of one faculty member serving as the Lower Division director and one faculty member serving as the GTA coordinator).

Dissemination of Assessment Results

1. At the end of each assessment cycle, the department's Assessment Coordinator and the Lower Division Director have disseminated the assessment results to the department faculty either through the listserv and/or at department meetings. In 2016, this information was shared with the department faculty at its Department Meeting on November 14, 2016.
2. The assessment results have been shared annually with the university's Information Literacy Librarians who collaborate closely with the English department in a combined effort to improve student outcomes. In 2016, relevant sections of the report were discussed on November 10, 2016,

with Dr. Jason Vance, Walker Library Faculty member, and shared by Dr. Vance with the Information Literacy Faculty Advisory Group on November 18, 2016.

3. The assessment results and the assessment process are examined by the university's General Education Committee. In 2016, the committee provided feedback to the department's Assessment Coordinator on October 28, 2016, and their suggestions were incorporated in the final report.
4. The report was shared and discussed with Dr. Maria Bachman, English Department Chair, and Drs. Julie Barger and Kate Pantelides, Co-Directors of Lower Division English, on November 9, 2016. Their feedback was incorporated in the final report.
5. The assessment report is shared with the Dean of Liberal Arts and the Provost.

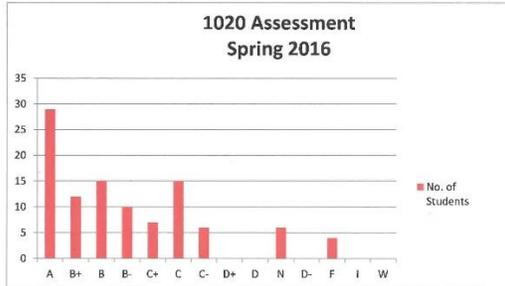
Concluding Remarks

This year's assessment results have the following implications regarding decisions related to assessment and instruction:

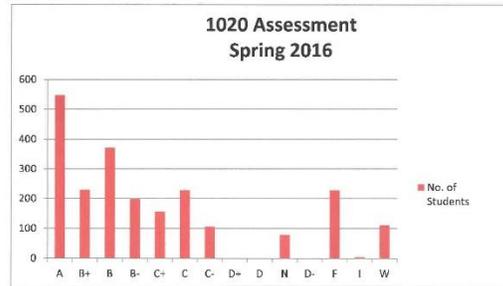
1. **Maintain a 5-point scoring scale in future assessments.**
Rationale: This scale is more in line with how performance is typically evaluated in academic contexts and discriminates more effectively in the middle range of performance. It has been successfully employed in two rounds of assessment (2015 and 2016) and has provided richer and more discriminating data.
2. **Continue using the benchmarks for Outcomes A-F to ensure better inter-rater agreement.**
Rationale: The benchmarks provide valuable information when interpreting the data than the 5-point scoring without descriptive markers of performance at each level of performance. These benchmarks may also be used to guide instruction.
3. **Continue implementing enrollment caps in General Education writing courses.**
Rationale: The department has been advocating for limiting enrollment in its General Education writing courses to 20 students in line with the *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing* advocated by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting>). Enrollment caps are a significant variable in writing achievement because enrollment caps in writing intensive courses create opportunities for more individualized feedback during the writing process and ensure more rapid and detailed evaluation of students' writing. Thanks to the continued support of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the University Provost, the department has been able to limit enrollment accordingly. The improvement in student performance is certainly largely due to the individualized attention students in ENGL 1010 and 1020 are, therefore, receiving from their ENGL instructors.

APPENDIX A

POPULATION vs. SAMPLE GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS



Total Students 104
Avg. Grade 2.9 B
(excluding I, F, W's)



Total Students 2260
Avg. Grade 3.0 B
(excluding I, F, W's)

APPENDIX B

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT
WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRICⁱ
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
June 15, 2016

OUTCOME A: The student writer is able to distill a primary argument into a single, compelling statement.

5	The paper foregrounds a succinct, unambiguous, & focused thesis, that is, a <i>central, controlling claim</i> that is <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>arguable</i> (rather than a fact, a recognized truth, or a matter of personal taste),• <i>reasoned</i> (e.g., "E-cigarettes should be regulated <i>because</i> ...), and• functions as the main <i>result</i> of the research.
4	The paper foregrounds a thesis that is a <i>central, controlling claim</i> but is a bit less compelling, focused, succinct or unambiguous.
3	The paper contains a thesis but, in meeting the stated purpose of the paper, is too broad, too narrow, or lacks adequate focus.
2	The paper contains elements of a thesis (e.g., a central claim, reasons) but fails to bring together these elements in a statement that most readers would recognize as a "thesis."
1	The paper lacks any sense of a central claim related to the paper's stated purpose.

OUTCOME B: The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience.

5	The paper establishes a clear, specific purpose in relation to <i>impressive</i> knowledge of pertinent research and, in doing so, establishes a strong sense of audience (viz., the paper demonstrates knowledge of an "academic conversation" and is tailored to take part in that conversation).
4	The paper establishes its purpose in relation to <i>ample</i> knowledge of pertinent research and, in doing so, establishes a clear sense of audience.
3	The paper defines a purpose and establishes a sense of audience based on <i>rudimentary</i> knowledge of pertinent research (viz., the paper demonstrates some awareness that it needs to contribute to an existing academic conversation).
2	The paper maintains a purpose and sense of audience, though not formulated in response to pertinent research (i.e., the purpose is not situated in a conversation).
1	The paper does not exhibit a <i>controlling</i> sense of purpose and audience. The paper exhibits shifts in audience or lacks a clear sense of audience altogether.

OUTCOME C: The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on primary argument.

5	From the beginning, the paper provides readers with a clear sense of direction (organization). The paper maintains that sense of direction by using cues (e.g., transitions) to guide readers from one step to the next. The conclusion of the paper carries the sense that the paper's stated purpose has been achieved.
4	The paper provides readers with a clear sense of direction though that sense of direction is not always maintained clearly through the use of discursive cues.
3	The paper contains some but minimal effort to give readers a sense of its direction.
2	The paper seems to have some sense of direction but does nothing to make that direction clear to readers.
1	The paper lacks a sense of direction and, thus, lacks global organization.

OUTCOME D: The student writer is able to develop his/her ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).

5	The paper is <i>impressive</i> in its development of arguments, e.g., by defining key words, by clarifying ideas through the use of examples or the use of comparison, by clarification through use of narration or classification.
4	The paper develops several of its arguments, e.g., by defining key words, by clarifying ideas through the use of examples or the use of comparison, by clarification through use of narration or classification.
3	The paper reflects an understanding of the need to develop ideas but develops only one or two.
2	The paper reflects some but inadequate effort at developing its ideas.
1	The paper shows no effort at developing its ideas.

OUTCOME E: The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources.

5	<p>The paper makes <i>impressive</i> use of basic information from multiple, reliable sources to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make clear the situation, problem, or question that the paper engages; • introduce readers to different positions in an academic "conversation" regarding the situation, problem, or question; and • provide supporting evidence for the paper's arguments. <p>All of the information from sources is well integrated and is appropriately attributed to the sources.</p>
4	<p>The paper makes <i>good</i> use of basic information from multiple, reliable sources to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make clear the situation, problem, or question that the paper engages; • introduce readers to different positions in an academic "conversation" regarding the situation, problem, or question; and • provide supporting evidence for the paper's arguments.

	Most of the information from sources is well integrated and appropriately attributed to the sources.
3	The paper provides supporting information from multiple sources, but the reliability or appropriateness of some sources would be regarded as questionable by likely readers of the paper. Information from sources is adequately integrated and attributed to the sources.
2	The paper provides supporting information, but only from one source or from multiple unreliable sources. Information is poorly integrated and/or poorly attributed to the sources.
1	The paper fails to use basic information gathered from multiple, reliable sources. Information is not integrated and is not attributed to the sources.

OUTCOME F: The student writer is able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

5	The paper reflects a degree of mastery over diction, grammar, syntax, and usage in formal written English, as well as a degree of mastery over other conventions appropriate to academic papers (e.g., APA or MLA documentation style), including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
4	In spite of a few errors, the paper reflects control over diction, grammar, syntax, and usage in formal written English, as well as control of conventions appropriate to the purpose of the paper, including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
3	In spite of numerous errors, the paper reflects basic control over formal written English, as well as control of conventions appropriate to the purpose of the paper, including the appropriate mechanics for citing sources.
2	The paper contains an obtrusive number of grammatical, syntactic, or usage, and provides minimal mastery of the mechanics for citing sources.
1	The paper reflects a significant lack of control over formal written English (including diction, grammar, usage, and mechanics).

ⁱ This document describes the levels of quality in performance for each of the TBR-mandated outcomes for assessing General Education Competency in writing. The rubric was developed by Dr. James Comas with input from a committee of English faculty representing all the faculty ranks in the department (GTA, adjunct instructor, full-time temporary lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor). The committee consisted of Deborah Barnard, Lando Carter, James Comas, Megan Donelson, Morgan Hanson, Martha Hixon, Jennifer Kates, Rebecca King, Kate Pantelides, Robert Petersen, Aaron Shapiro, Kathleen Therrien, and Aleka Blackwell (Department's Assessment Coordinator). The following sources were consulted in the development of the rubric:

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2014). Textbook commonly used in ENGL 1020 at MTSU.
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Standard reference work for writers of research.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year 2015-2016

Subject Area: Critical Thinking

1. **Identify the Performance-Funding test of general education used by your institution.**

California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST)

2. **If you used sampling as permitted by THEC, describe the method used.**

Sampling was not used.

3. **Present the institutional mean scores or sub-scores on the Performance Funding instrument that your institution reviewed to assess students' comprehension and evaluation of arguments. If comparable scores for a peer group are available, also present them.**

MTSU = 16.2

National = 17.1

4. **Summarize your impressions of the results yielded by the THEC test regarding critical thinking. Based upon your interpretations of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of critical thinking skills?**

The CCTST requires students to draw inferences, make interpretations, analyze information, draw warranted inferences, identify claims and reasons, and evaluate the quality of arguments using brief passages, diagrams, and charts. The 2015-16 score for MTSU students (16.2) is below the MTSU score in 2014-15 (16.7) and is below the 2015-16 national average (17.1). In four of the past seven years, MTSU students' scores have been above the national average. However, scores have declined in each of the past three years and have dipped below the national average, which has remained stable at 17.1.

Academic Year	CCTST MTSU Mean Score	CCTST National Mean
2009-10	17.3	16.8
2010-11	17.0	16.8
2011-12	17.1	16.7
2012-13	17.1	16.7
2013-14	16.9	17.1
2014-15	16.7	17.1
2015-16	16.2	17.1

5. **Do you plan any strategies to correct deficiencies or opportunities for improvement that emerged with respect to critical thinking? If so, describe them below.**

Critical thinking is addressed across the curriculum and in a number of university initiatives, including the following:

MTSU's new Quality Enhancement Plan (MT Engage), which was implemented in fall 2016, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, specifically integrative thinking and critical reflection.

Faculty across the university have been involved in course redesign in General Education for the past two years, and all redesign models emphasize the adoption of high impact practices that encourage active learning and critical thinking.

The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) continues to offer workshops that help faculty incorporate strategies for improving critical thinking. For example, in 2015-16, the LT&ITC offered workshops on topics such as course redesign for increased student engagement, active learning, experiential learning, Reacting to the Past pedagogy (elaborate role-playing games), MT Engage pedagogies (including the use of ePortfolios to encourage integrative thinking and assessment), etc.

All General Education courses emphasize the development of critical thinking skills. The three required courses in the Communication category, in particular, provide incoming students with an introduction to the critical and analytical skills necessary for success in college. Small class size in these courses is essential to insure that students receive the individual attention they need to develop these skills. The General Education Committee has recommended to the Provost that class size in the courses in the Communication category not exceed the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Communication Association. The General Education Committee continues to recommend that class size not exceed the guidelines endorsed by professional organizations.

Critical thinking skills will continue to be emphasized in General Education and in each degree program (see Institutional Effectiveness Reports for the various majors).

Instructors of UNIV 1010 will continue to assign textbooks that contain a critical thinking component.

Tutoring in the University Writing Center emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills in the writing process. Instructors will continue to encourage students to work with the Center's trained tutors.

The University Library Research Coach service (which offers students in-depth, one-on-one sessions with a librarian) emphasizes critical thinking in finding and selecting the best books, articles, and database resources for projects, papers, and presentations. Instructors will continue to advise students to use this service.