

**Middle Tennessee State University
General Education Competencies
Assessment Report 2020 -2021**

Assessment of General Education Learning Competencies

Academic Year: 2020-2021

Subject Area: Oral Communication

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

COMM 2200 (Fundamentals of Communication) was used for oral communication assessment at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) for the Spring of 2021 semester. The prefix for this course is “COMM” which is short for communication. The number for this course is “2200.” The title for this course is the “Fundamentals of Communication.” Persuasive speeches were the focal point for our assessment efforts. COMM 2200 is the only course that we used for oral communication assessment.

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.

It was during the Spring of 2021 semester that the Department of Communication Studies assessed a total of 157 students ($N = 157$). Purposive sampling was used in our 2021 assessment of COMM 2200. The main reason why purposive sampling was utilized was tied to implications associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our efforts were organized in January of 2021 when social distancing from others was being promoted by the university, local health experts, and national health experts. It did not seem beneficial to employ a randomized sampling procedure which would have required an evaluator to physically attend COMM 2200 speeches on-ground and live in-person. This would have pushed the threshold for the maximum person occupancy per classroom and potentially caused unnecessary health issues. Thus, we used a purposive sampling method in which only online sections of COMM 2200 were assessed during the Spring of 2021 semester. A secondary reason for employing a purposive sampling technique this year was that it allowed for the inclusion of a dual enrollment section in our sample. It was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic that we commonly utilized a stratified sampling procedure. Dual enrollment sections were included in the pool in the previous two years, but were never randomly selected after the sections were divided by strata. The decision to use a sampling procedure that was not randomized this year facilitated the inclusion of a dual enrollment section into our sample this year. It should also be noted here that demographic data on the assessed students was not collected due to logistical considerations attached to the pandemic and because our sample only included online sections of COMM 2200. The approximate percentage of student work on persuasive speeches that was assessed was 9.37%. This sum is an estimate based on (a) 67 sections of COMM 2200 being taught in the Spring of 2021 semester and (b) based on the estimate that each section of COMM 2200 was filled to the maximum capacity of 25 students per section.

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 procedures described in item 1 and item 2 represent a significant change from our pilot assessment. The changes that were made from our normal processes were because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our normal process prior to the start of the pandemic in March of 2020 was to complete live in-class evaluations of student speeches. As alluded to previously, we directed our assessment efforts to online sections of COMM 2200 due to logistical considerations and health considerations associated with the pandemic. The main rationale for these changes was to conform with university and public health guidance. A secondary rationale was to accommodate the availability of our evaluators. Allowing our evaluators to access persuasive speeches in D2L at their convenience (as opposed to having to be on-ground at a set time) allowed them more flexibility to complete the necessary work. Further, as noted, the sampling procedure was also changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was another significant change from our normal assessment efforts. In short, our sampling procedure and data collection process were moderately changed because of the ongoing pandemic.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning competency 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 competencies not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

(See Table 1 on the Following Pages)

Table 1. Oral Communication Competencies for 2021

| ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric | Severely Deficient (1/A) | Inadequate (2/B) | Fair (3/C) | Good (4/D) | Excellent (5/E) |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Competency One: 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 speaker addresses his/her credibility on the subject, and 4. the speaker clearly relates the topic to the members of the audience]; the opening segment is adequately developed.</p> | Within the opening segment the speaker fails to meet all four criteria and/or the opening segment is missing. | Within the opening segment the speaker only meets <u>two</u> of the four criteria and/or the opening segment is severely under developed. | Within the opening segment the speaker meets <u>three</u> of the four criteria; and the opening segment lacks some development. | Within the opening segment the speaker meets all <u>four</u> criteria; the opening section may contain minor flaws in development. | Within the opening segment the speaker meets all <u>four</u> criteria; the opening segment is fully developed. |
| <p>Competency One (2021) $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.15$ ($N = 157$)</p> <p>(2020) $M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.27$ ($N = 113$)</p> | 2 (1.3%) 3 (2.7%) | 26 (16.6%) 21 (18.6%) | 23 (14.6%) 16 (14.2%) | 43 (27.4%) 17 (15.0%) | 63 (40.1%) 56 (49.6%) |
| <p>Competency Two: The speaker uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation, which may include one of the four patterns addressed in the Lucas text: problem-solution, problem-cause-solution, comparative advantages, or Monroe's Motivated Sequence</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. | 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]. | The speech is persuasive; the speaker uses an appropriate persuasive organizational pattern with some errors or omissions, and some arguments may be deficient | 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. | 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>Competency Two (2021) $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.13$ ($N = 157$)</p> <p>(2020) $M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.28$ ($N = 113$)</p> | 5 (3.2%) 6 (5.3%) | 12 (7.6%) 13 (11.5%) | 22 (14.0%) 15 (13.3%) | 27 (17.2%) 17 (15.0%) | 91 (58.0%) 62 (54.9%) |
| <p>Competency Three: The speaker provides supporting material (<i>examples, statistics and testimony</i>) appropriate for a persuasive presentation; the quality and variety of support clearly enhances the credibility of the speech.</p> | The speaker uses no supporting material. | The speaker's use of support material is lacking in variety, and/or is lacking in quality. | The speaker's use of support material is adequate but is somewhat deficient; may be lacking in quality or variety. | The speaker uses supporting material that is appropriate in quality and variety. | 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. |

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| <p>Competency Three (2021) $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.29$ ($N = 157$)</p> <p>(2020) $M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.16$ ($N = 113$)</p> | <p>6 (3.8%)</p> <p>3 (2.7%)</p> | <p>29 (18.5%)</p> <p>12 (10.6%)</p> | <p>17 (10.8%)</p> <p>17 (15.0%)</p> | <p>29 (18.5%)</p> <p>22 (19.5%)</p> | <p>76 (48.4%)</p> <p>39 (52.2%)</p> |
| <p>Competency Four: The speaker uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion. Additionally, the vocalics are suitable to the audience and occasion. Voice is conversational, is loud enough to be easily heard, and is energetic to maintain audience interest.</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. The speaker fails to meet <u>all</u> vocalics factors.</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. The speaker fails to meet <u>two</u> of the three vocalics factors.</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. The speaker meets all but <u>one</u> of the vocalics factors.</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. The speaker meets all <u>three</u> vocalics factors.</p> | <p>The speaker uses language that is exceptionally clear, vivid, and appropriate. Language is persuasive throughout the entire speech. Grammar, syntax, and diction are used to emphasize points. The speaker uses rhythmic devices such as parallelism and/or repetition etc., to create an especially compelling and clear message. The speaker makes exceptional use of all vocalics factors.</p> |
| <p>Competency Four (2021) $M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.99$ ($N = 157$)</p> <p>(2020) $M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.96$ ($N = 113$)</p> | <p>0 (0.0%)</p> <p>0 (0.0%)</p> | <p>10 (6.4%)</p> <p>9 (8.0%)</p> | <p>35 (22.3%)</p> <p>12 (10.6%)</p> | <p>29 (18.5%)</p> <p>25 (22.1%)</p> | <p>83 (52.9%)</p> <p>67 (59.3%)</p> |
| <p>Competency Five: The speaker demonstrates the ability to effectively utilize and document a variety of multiple, credible sources.</p> | <p>The speaker fails to include any source documentation in the presentation.</p> | <p>The speaker incorporates a few sources in the presentation, but the documentation is deficient [<u>three</u> or fewer sources cited]. Some sources do not appear credible and/or a variety of sources are not used.</p> | <p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of <u>four</u> sources in the presentation and the sources appear to be credible, but the documentation is deficient. Source credibility is not always established and/or a variety of sources are not used.</p> | <p>The speaker incorporates a minimum of <u>five</u> sources in the presentation; the sources appear to be credible, a variety of sources are utilized, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient.</p> | <p>The speaker incorporates <u>six</u> or more sources in the presentation; the sources are clearly credible, a variety of sources are utilized, and the source documentation is <u>not</u> deficient.</p> |
| <p>Competency Five (2021) $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.53$ ($N = 157$)</p> <p>(2020) $M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.44$ ($N = 113$)</p> | <p>17 (10.8%)</p> <p>10 (8.8%)</p> | <p>37 (23.6%)</p> <p>17 (15.0%)</p> | <p>9 (5.7%)</p> <p>16 (14.2%)</p> | <p>17 (10.8%)</p> <p>8 (7.1%)</p> | <p>77 (49.0%)</p> <p>62 (54.9%)</p> |

| ORAL PRESENTATION Rubric | Severely Deficient (1/A) | Inadequate (2/B) | Fair (3/C) | Good (4/D) | Excellent (5/E) |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Competency Six: Within the closing segment of the speech, the speaker meets the three criteria for an effective ending [1. the speaker signals the end of the speech; 2. the thesis / purpose statement is clearly restated, 3. The speaker ends with a memorable message]; the closing segment is adequately developed. | Within the closing segment the speaker fails to meet all three criteria and/or the closing segment is missing. | Within the closing segment the speaker only meets one of the three criteria and/or the closing segment is severely under developed. | Within the closing segment the speaker meets two of the three criteria; and the closing segment lacks some development. | Within the closing segment the speaker meets all three criteria; the closing section may contain minor flaws in development. | Within the closing segment the speaker meets all three criteria; the opening segment is exceptionally developed. |
| Competency Six (2021) $M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.06$ ($N = 157$) | 5 (3.2%) | 8 (5.1%) | 33 (21.0%) | 47 (29.9%) | 64 (40.8%) |
| (2020) $M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.28$ ($N = 113$) | 8 (7.1%) | 7 (6.2%) | 26 (23.0%) | 13 (11.5%) | 59 (52.2%) |
| Competency Seven: The speaker maintains appropriate eye contact with the entire audience throughout the presentation. | The speaker fails to establish any eye contact with the audience; reads the presentation. | The speaker establishes minimal eye contact with the audience; eye contact is limited to one focal point. | The speaker establishes some eye contact with the audience; eye contact is limited to one or two focal points. | The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience; focal points are varied. | The speaker establishes an appropriate amount of eye contact with the audience, the focal points are varied and the speaker is intentional in establishing eye contact with the entire audience. |
| Competency Seven (2021) $M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.16$ ($N = 157$) | 8 (5.1%) | 8 (5.1%) | 28 (17.8%) | 33 (21.0%) | 80 (51.0%) |
| (2020) $M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.07$ ($N = 113$) | 5 (4.4%) | 1 (0.9%) | 21 (18.6%) | 20 (17.7%) | 66 (58.4%) |
| Competency Eight: The speaker uses physical behaviors (body movement, gestures and posture) that support the verbal message and enhance the speaker's appearance of confidence and competence. | The speaker uses almost no gestures and/or body movement during the presentation to support the verbal message. The speaker's posture significantly detracts from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker. | The speaker uses very limited gestures and/or body movement during the presentation and/or the gestures do not support the verbal message. The speaker's posture detracts somewhat from his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker. | The speaker utilizes some body movement gestures to support the verbal message. The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a somewhat confident and competent speaker. | The speaker uses <u>both</u> body movement and gestures during the presentation to enhance the verbal message. The speaker's posture supports his/her appearance as a confident and competent speaker. | The speaker uses <u>both</u> body movement and gestures during the presentation. The movement and gesture add significantly to the clarity and impact of the message and enhances the verbal message. The speaker uses posture that supports the verbal message and the speaker appears to be a strong, confident and competent speaker. |

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| Competency Eight (2021) $M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.10$ ($N = 157$) | 7 (4.5%) | 8 (5.1%) | 18 (11.5%) | 47 (29.9%) | 77 (49.0%) |
| (2020) $M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.90$ ($N = 113$) | 1 (0.9%) | 3 (2.7%) | 17 (15.0%) | 22 (19.5%) | 70 (61.9%) |

*For the purpose of comparison, data from 2021 are presented in blue. Data from 2020 are presented in red.

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?

Data from the 2021 assessment of COMM 2200 (which were reported in the fourth item above) produced some interpretations and conclusions that pertain to learning outcomes. The following bullet-points provide a breakdown and interpretation of each competency. The last part of this section puts forth some general conclusions.

- **Competency I:** The first competency centered on the opening segment of the assessed speech. Results indicated that 82.1% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the first competency. More specifically, the findings revealed that 14.6% of students ($N = 23$) were evaluated as fair, 27.4% of students ($N = 43$) were evaluated as good, and 40.1% of students ($N = 63$) were evaluated as excellent. It was at the other end of the spectrum that 17.9% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. An inadequate assessment was applied by evaluators to 16.6% of the student ($N = 26$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was applied by evaluators to 1.3% of the student ($N = 2$) speeches.
 - The results from competency I were respectable. A miniscule downward trend was observed on competency I in 2021 relative to the data that emerged on competency I in 2020 ($t(268) = -0.117$, $p = .907$). A closer look at the data reveals the mean score on this competency was 3.89 in 2021 while the mean score was 3.90 in 2020. This does represent a .01 decrease, but this data is not worrisome. That is, the 2021 data suggests our students are performing at a level that is close to the good category rating and nicely above the fair category as it relates to the introductory component of her/his persuasive speech.
- **Competency II:** The second competency looked at whether students used an organizational pattern that was persuasive in nature. Results indicated that 89.2% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher for the second competency. Categorically speaking, the findings from this analysis illustrated that 14.0% of students ($N = 22$) were evaluated as fair, while 17.2% of students ($N = 27$) were evaluated as good, and 58.0% of students ($N = 91$) were evaluated as excellent. In contrast, a total of 10.8% of students were evaluated as inadequate or severely deficient. The breakdown reveals that evaluators assigned the label of inadequate for competency II to 7.6% of the student ($N = 12$) speeches and an assessment of severely deficient was assigned by evaluators to 3.2% of the student ($N = 5$) speeches.
 - The findings on competency II were good. A non-statistically significant upward trend was observed when the 2021 data for competency II was compared to the 2020 data on competency II ($t(268) = 1.115$, $p = .266$). All things considered, the

observed results on the second competency suggests students are effectively organizing their speeches in a manner that is appropriately persuasive.

- **Competency III:** The third competency for this study looked at the use of appropriate supporting materials. The findings for the third competency indicated that 77.7% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. A further breakdown revealed that 10.8% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as fair, while 18.5% of the students ($N = 29$) were evaluated as good, and 48.4% of students ($N = 76$) were evaluated as excellent. Additional data for the third competency found that 18.5% of students ($N = 29$) were evaluated as inadequate. A total of 3.8% of students ($N = 3$) were evaluated as severely deficient.
 - The findings from the third competency were a bit concerning. Stated differently, the findings for the third competency for 2021 when compared to the third competency for 2020 showed evidence of a downward trend, albeit not statistically significant ($t(268) = -1.229, p = .220$). Nevertheless, the mean results for the third competency revealed that students in COMM 2200 are near the category of good as it relates to incorporating supporting materials that are appropriate (e.g., statistics, examples, etc.) into her/his speech.
- **Competency IV:** The fourth competency for the 2021 assessment of COMM 2200 concentrated on language features such as whether appropriate grammar, diction, and syntax were used in the speech. The emergent data on the fourth competency indicated that 93.7% of students were evaluated at a level that was fair or higher. The specifics for the fourth competency illustrated that 22.3% of students ($N = 35$) were evaluated as fair, while 18.5% of the students ($N = 29$) were evaluated as good, and 52.9% of students ($N = 83$) were evaluated as excellent. The findings also revealed that 6.4% of students were evaluated as inadequate or lower. Specifically, 6.4% of students ($N = 10$) were evaluated as inadequate and 0.0% of students ($N = 0$) were evaluated as severely deficient.
 - The results from competency IV were good again this year. A non-statistically significant downward trend emerged when the 2021 data for the fourth competency was compared to the 2020 data for this fourth competency ($t(268) = -1.237, p = .217$). Categorically speaking, the data which was uncovered on this competency shows that variables related to language and voice criteria are above the level of good for our COMM 2200 students.
- **Competency V:** The fifth competency for our oral communication assessment focused on gathering and using multiple sources. Results indicated that 65.5% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. A further rundown for the fifth competency revealed that 5.7% of students ($N = 9$) were evaluated as fair, while 10.8% of students ($N = 17$) were evaluated as good, and 49.0% of students ($N = 77$) were evaluated as excellent. At the same time, the evaluators found that 34.4% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 23.6% of students ($N = 37$) as inadequate and evaluated 10.8% of students ($N = 17$) as severely deficient.
 - The findings on competency V should be watched closely in future assessments. It was in the current analysis that comparing the observed data on the fifth competency in 2021 against the observed data on the fifth competency in 2020

did not reveal a statistical difference between these two years ($t(268) = -1.104, p = .270$). Historically speaking, a mean score of 3.64 on a 5-point Likert scale for this competency falls in line with mean scores on this competency over the four previous years.

- **Competency VI:** The sixth competency for the oral communication assessment focused on the closing segment of a speech. Results indicated that 91.7% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher in 2021. A further rundown for the sixth competency revealed that 21.0% of students ($N = 33$) were evaluated as fair, while 29.9% of students ($N = 47$) were evaluated as good, and 40.8% of students ($N = 64$) were evaluated as excellent. That noted, the evaluators found that 8.3% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 5.1% of speeches ($N = 8$) as inadequate and evaluated 3.2% of speeches ($N = 5$) as severely deficient.
 - The findings on competency VI are good as it relates to the utilized rubric. The process of comparing the observed data on the fifth competency in 2021 against the observed data on the fifth competency in 2020 did not yield a statistical difference between these two years ($t(268) = 0.310, p = .757$). As a matter of consistency, the mean score on a 5-point Likert scale was 4.00 in 2021 and 3.96 in 2020.
- **Competency VII:** The seventh competency for the oral communication assessment concentrated on appropriate eye contact. Results indicated that 89.8% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. More specifically, the findings for the seventh competency indicated that 17.8% of students ($N = 28$) were evaluated as fair, while 21.0% of students ($N = 33$) were evaluated as good, and 51.0% of students ($N = 80$) were evaluated as excellent. In contrast, the 2021 evaluators found that 10.2% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 5.1% of students ($N = 8$) as inadequate and evaluated 5.1% of students ($N = 8$) as severely deficient.
 - The findings on this competency are fine. A non-statistically significant decrease was observed when the 2021 data on this competency was compared against the 2020 data on this competency ($t(268) = -1.233, p = .219$). Indeed, the uncovered data was slightly above the category of good for this competency, but this solid finding is potentially a byproduct of the data collection process being modified because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Competency VIII:** The eighth competency for the oral communication assessment concentrated on nonverbal communication. Results indicated that 90.4% of students were evaluated at a grade of fair or higher. Findings for the eighth competency revealed that 11.5% of students ($N = 18$) were evaluated as fair, while 29.9% of students ($N = 47$) were evaluated as good, and 49.0% of students ($N = 77$) were evaluated as excellent. At the same time, the evaluators found that 9.6% of student speeches were inadequate or lower. Evaluators rated 5.1% of students ($N = 8$) as inadequate and evaluated 4.5% of students ($N = 7$) as severely deficient.
 - The findings on competency VIII were good if they are contextually situated as being based on the mean score. However, a statistically significant decrease was observed when the 2021 data on competency VIII was compared against the 2020

data on competency VIII ($t(268) = -1.985, p = .048$). All things considered, this was the only competency in which a statistical difference was uncovered when the current data was compared to data from the Spring of 2020 semester.

Overall Interpretation and Analysis

The overall analysis of the data which emerged in the 2021 assessment of oral communication can be summarized as good. A statistically significant decrease was uncovered on competency eight relative to the 2020 assessment data on competency eight. Non-statistically significant decreases were observed on competencies one, three, four, and five in relation to the uncovered data from the 2020 assessment of COMM 2200 for those particular competencies. An increase was observed on competencies two and six when the 2021 data was matched against the 2020 data. The following paragraphs provide additional context and interpretations of the uncovered findings.

There are five overall interpretations of the 2021 data for the course of COMM 2200 that should be noted in context. First, competency five was the competency in which our students obtained the lowest mean score. Students earned a mean score of 3.64 on a 5-point Likert scale for competency five. This is not surprising in the sense that COMM 2200 students have historically performed at a level that is low on this competency relative to the other seven competencies that are measured in our assessment. For instance, this was also the competency that our students had the lowest mean score on in our 2020 assessment of COMM 2200. Improving student performance on competency five has been discussed at four different COMM 2200 meetings in the past five years. The message that COMM 2200 instructors are encouraged to share with students in their class is to incorporate six outside sources into her/his speech. This falls in line with the excellent category of the rubric which specifies “the speaker incorporates six or more sources in the presentation.” Some students adhere to this message. Some students do not adhere to this message. It appears that some students are okay with having less than six sources and taking a lower grade on this criterion in lieu of putting in the appropriate time needed to secure a robust amount of sources. There is anecdotal data from COMM 2200 assessment over the past five years which corroborates with this notion. Comparatively speaking, finding six sources for a speech is probably the most time-consuming competency of the eight competencies that we measure in the performance of our students. This forthcoming spring we will have our instructors encourage our students to incorporate seven different sources into her/his persuasive speech. This may or may not make a difference. All things considered, a score of 3.64 on a 5-point Likert scale is closer to the good than fair rating, but it continues to be an area of improvement for our students.

Second, a statistically significant decrease was observed on the data for competency eight in 2021 when measured against the data for competency eight in 2020. This was a surprising outcome. It is difficult to offer a logical reason for why this decrease occurred. The same evaluators were used in 2021 assessment and 2020 assessment. The same training took place in 2021 assessment and 2020 assessment. The same rubric was used in 2021 assessment and 2020 assessment. The same general population of students was assessed in 2021 assessment and 2020 assessment. The same textbook was used in all of our sections of COMM 2200. One possible reason for the decrease on competency eight which centers on nonverbal communication is that student instruction for this

competency was just less emphasized in our classroom in the 2020-2021 academic year. Comparatively speaking, this competency is less likely to be taught in-depth relative to the seven other competencies. The other seven competencies are inherently more integral components of effective oral communication. Further, the semester being one week shorter in the spring relative to a non-pandemic semester might have resulted in this competency being even less of a focal point of discussion in our actual and virtual classrooms. This is merely conjecture. Similarly, it would be reckless to propose a bevy of other possible explanations for the decrease on this outcome without empirical data to support those explanations. This outcome needs to be watched going forward. All in all, it is not clear why a statistically significant decrease was observed on this competency, but COMM 2200 instructors will be encouraged to amend their pedagogical efforts on nonverbal communication to hopefully improve scores on this competency in the forthcoming academic year.

Third, an overarching trend in the data this year was that negligible differences were observed on seven of our eight competencies. This is unexciting to note, but it is good to note because it shows the stability of our data on the majority of our competencies. Mean scores were a score of 4.0 or above on a 5.0-point Likert on five of our eight competencies. Those are scores that are at or above the category of good in terms of measurement evaluation. None of our scores were below a mean score of 3.5 on any of the competencies. Additionally, the grand mean (for all of our competencies) was 4.0012 on a 5-point Likert scale. Categorically speaking, this suggests our students are doing good. Broadly speaking, are students are doing good in a categorical sense and in a literal sense.

Fourth, it is encouraging to see that our highest mean score was on competency two which concentrates on whether the speaker used an organizational pattern that was appropriate for persuasive speaking. The mean score on this competency was 4.19 on a 5-point Likert scale in 2021 versus 4.03 on a 5-point Likert scale in 2020. This increase was not statistically significant, but it was a nice rebound from our previous year. It was in the 2020 report that we identified this competency as a point of improvement for our students and for the instructors who teach the course of COMM 2200. This message appears to have taken root with our instructors as well as our students who performed at a level that was above good. It is also noteworthy to mention that our 2021 data on this competency returned to a level of being commensurate with our last non-COVID influenced semester. That is, our mean score of 4.19 on competency II was more consistent with the mean of 4.25 for competency II which emerged in the Spring of 2019 semester. It is possible that the lower score on this competency last year could have been an anomaly due to a COVID influenced sample as opposed to being a new trend in the data. Either way, improving scores on competency two was a point of emphasis for us during the most recent academic year and it is good to see that scores for this competency have returned to a place which mirrors our pre-pandemic data for this competency.

Fifth, it is important to reiterate that the data which was uncovered in 2021 was again influenced by pandemic. Our normal method of sampling and data collection did not take place in the Spring of 2021 semester. Thus, it is possible (albeit unlikely) that the statistically significant decrease on competency eight may have been connected to the pandemic changing our normal processes and pedagogical efforts. This is speculation, but it is not speculative to say that our processes were affected by the pandemic. Either way,

a possible return to pre-pandemic normalcy as it relates to COMM 2200 in the Spring of 2022 semester has the potential to further stabilize the data which was uncovered for our outcomes.

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

The answer to this question is yes. Strategies will be implemented to correct deficiencies in the data. As alluded to previously, the main strategy will be to encourage students to incorporate seven sources into her or his persuasive speech in the Spring of 2022 semester. This would potentially benefit scores on competency five. Instructors of COMM 2200 will be informed of this push to have her/his students incorporate seven sources into her/his speech at a COMM 2200 meeting during the 2021-2022 academic year. This is the simplest strategy to address this deficiency. As previously noted, drawing attention to areas of improvement for our lagging competency at COMM 2200 assessment meetings (which traditionally occurs in January of each year) has benefitted our data in the subsequent assessment. Previous strategies to incentivize or more harshly grade students who were lacking with supporting materials within the classroom (with regards to competency five) did not bring about a statistical change that was meaningful. That noted, bringing more attention to the importance of having seven sources in her/his speech could also peripherally benefit scores on competency three, which looks at the quality of supporting materials. Another strategy that has the potential to benefit student scores on competency five is returning to on-ground/live in-person librarian instruction sessions. This resource which involves an on-ground class session of COMM 2200 being led by a reference and instruction librarian has traditionally benefitted our students. This was done considerably less (in general) and much less in person during the 2020-2021 academic year due to the pandemic. It is certainly possible that having less librarian-led instruction on-ground contributed to the mean score on this competency decreasing from a score 3.84 in 2020 to a score of 3.64 in 2021. It is at the time this report is being written that more classes are inching towards a level of pre-pandemic normalcy. Consequently, more on-ground librarian-led instruction sessions would likely benefit scores on this competency. Another strategy that will be implemented for a different competency involves placing more COMM 2200 meeting attention on the eighth competency which broadly concentrates on nonverbal communication. Instructors of COMM 2200 will be encouraged to further and additionally illustrate what good nonverbal communication during a speech looks like relative to their teachings in the previous year. This subtle manipulation to lectures and extra attention being paid to competency eight prior to data collection in 2022 will hopefully benefit our scores on this particular competency.

The additional (and still recurring) strategy that would help correct deficiencies for our competencies would be to establish a speaking center on campus. This has been documented in previous assessment reports. It should continue to be noted. Unfortunately, this is still unlikely to transpire in the forthcoming academic year but the notion of re-establishing a speaking center on campus is being highlighted within the current document as a means to keep it on the academic radar for the larger campus community. As noted, the benefits of an on-ground speaking center have been well-documented in previous scholarship that has highlighted the importance of this resource (see Yook & Atkins-Sayre, 2012). A speaking center would be a particularly

effective resource for students to be tutored on how to secure the appropriate quality and quantity of sources for her or his speech. Additionally, tutoring students at a speaking center on campus would offer more individualized and personalized assistance to students who are struggling on any competency that involves oral communication assessment.

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

Yes, plans were implemented to correct deficiencies based upon the data of our previous assessment. The main deficiency that was noted in the 2020 assessment report of COMM 2200 centered on competency two, which looks at whether the oral communication was organized in a persuasive pattern. As noted, the mean score increased from 4.03 in the Spring of 2020 to a score of 4.19 in the Spring of 2021. This was talked about in a COMM 2200 meeting in January of 2021. Specifically, COMM 2200 educators were instructed to further encourage students to use a persuasive speech pattern during class/Zoom time before the semester started. It is likely that many instructors made this a point of emphasis (although that data was not formally tracked) in her/his courses this spring. Many students were offered a friendly reminder in class or via Zoom to use a persuasive speech pattern the week prior to data collection. These subtle reminders appeared to have moved the dial upward in terms of increasing the mean score on competency two.

The other deficiency that was highlighted in the 2020 assessment report of COMM 2200 involved the mean score on competency five. This competency broadly focuses on the quantity of supporting materials which a student incorporates into her/his speech. Scores decreased on this competency in 2021 relative to 2020. The previous plan to correct this deficiency was to discuss this at a COMM 2200 meeting in January of 2021. This plan was executed as scheduled. Nevertheless, the scores on this competency did not stabilize or increase. As hinted at in an earlier section of this report, the new plan is to encourage students to have seven sources incorporated into the body of her/his speech. That noted, their needs to be manageable expectations about student performance on this particular competency. Some students will not find any sources for her/his speech. This is a very small group of students, but there is nevertheless a faction of students who will not utilize any sources in her/his speech. As a consequence, this will keep the mean score on this competency at a lower level regardless of planning. For instance, the uncovered data showed a 2.0%-point increase in the number of students ($N = 17$) who were evaluated in the severely deficient category for this competency relative to the year prior. This competency category specifies that a speaker failed to include any source documentation in the presentation. As noted, 10.8% of students had no sources. Likewise, and perhaps more concerning, was the 8.6%-point increase for the inadequate category for this competency, which means the speaker had three or fewer sources incorporated into her/his speech. When taken together, this competency (comparatively speaking) requires the most independent work of students. It is the most time-consuming competency for students. Simply put, there is always likely to be cohort of students who will not incorporate any sources into her/his speech every single year. As stated previously, the plan is to inform students that they should incorporate seven sources into her/his speech. The strategy of asking more than what is required has not been previously explored.

Hopefully, this strategy will help offset the small sample of students who will not do any research for her/his speech. Future analyses of oral communication competencies will reveal additional insight on the eighth competency and fifth competency as it relates to improving COMM 2200 assessment. In summation, the aforementioned deficiencies will be addressed in the forthcoming academic year, but the overall findings suggest our students are continuing to perform at a level that is good as it pertains to the eight measured competencies which are embedded into the oral communication competency assessment report.

References

Yook, E, & Atkins-Sayre, W. (2012). *Communication centers and oral communication programs in higher education: Advantages, challenges, and new directions*. Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes
Subject Area: Mathematics
Academic Year: 2020-2021

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.
 - Final exam results from 561 students in Fall 2020 and 245 students in Spring 2021 were submitted by instructors of MATH 1710 and MATH 1710K. The intent was to use the data from all 806 students to assess the five General Education Mathematics Learning Outcomes.
3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.
 - A department final exam was administered with each of the five general education mathematics learning outcomes associated with a specific set of questions on the final examination. See attachments for the final exam and the learning outcomes alignment. Aggregate data was to then be analyzed per sub-aggregates as determined by learning outcomes according to the following assignments:
 - At least 85% is deemed superior,
 - Between 60% and 84%, inclusive, is deemed satisfactory, and
 - Less than 60% is deemed unsatisfactory.
 - Due to the global pandemic the method of instructional delivery was severely altered starting in Spring of 2020 and continuing through Spring 21. The final exam was administered through the university's Learning Management System requiring students to take the exam remotely and online. This resulted in 3 significant differences from past procedures:
 - The final exam was not proctored.
 - The final exam was not secure resulting in the inability to ensure the validity and accuracy of the data.
 - The format of the data reported by each instructor did not allow for the analysis of the sub-aggregates. Sample data from one instructor is attached.

In the past, the department final exam was administered on campus and the scantron grading machine was used to grade exams and sort data. Without the individual exams on scantron sheets, the grading software cannot be utilized to obtain the data needed for sub-aggregate analysis. Normal assessment procedures resumed in Fall 2021 and will continue going forward.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SUBJECT AREA: WRITING

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2020-2021

0. Overview

This annual assessment was conducted by the Department of English. In AY 2020-2021, the learning outcomes were assessed by sampling the writing of a stratified random sample of students enrolled in *ENGL 1010 Expository Writing* in fall 2020. Dr. Aleka Blackwell, General Education Assessment Coordinator in the English department, coordinated the data collection and conducted the data analyses and reported the findings in items 1-5 in this report. Dr. Kate Pantelides, General Education English Director, addressed the questions and completed items 6-8. Dr. Stephen Severn, English Department Chair, has approved this final version of the report.

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

ENGL 1010 Expository 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.

2.1 Selection of students

As shown in Table 1, a stratified random sample of 160 students was drawn from the population of 2,362 students enrolled in sections of ENGL 1010 in fall 2020. The stratification met the following criteria:

- (i) sampling a minimum of 5% of each subpopulation of students,
- (ii) creating cells with a minimum of 15 students for subpopulations of 45 or more students.

Table 1. Student Population Sampling

| Sections | Notes | Type of Instruction | <i>N</i> sections | <i>N</i> students | <i>n</i> students | sampling % |
|----------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| All | | | 143 | 2,362 | 160 | 7 |
| 1010 | | Face to Face (in class or remote) | 77 | 1,317 | 60 | 5 |
| 1010D | MTSU Online | Online Asynchronous | 3 | 46 | 15 | 33 |
| 1010H | Honors | Face to Face (in class or remote) | 5 | 84 | 15 | 18 |
| 1010J | Dual Enrollment | Face to Face | 19 | 338 | 30 | 9 |
| 1010JD | Dual Enrollment | Online Asynchronous | 7 | 116 | 15 | 13 |
| 1010K | Prescribed | Face to Face (in class or remote) | 30 | 436 | 20 | 5 |
| 1010KD | Prescribed | Online Asynchronous | 1 | 15 | 2 | 13 |
| 1010L | MT Engage/RLC | Face to Face | 1 | 10 | 3 | 30 |

2.2 Selection of student work

Three major graded writing assignments in their final form submitted for a grade were collected from ENGL 1010 instructors for each student in the sample.

2.3 Writing Outcomes

The areas of evaluation were developed in AY 2018-2019, the first year during which the English department assessed writing performance by sampling students enrolled in ENGL 1010 rather than ENGL 1020. At that time, a committee of twelve English faculty with many years of experience teaching ENGL 1010, including four Graduate Teaching Assistants, convened to develop the list of writing outcomes to be assessed.¹ The writing outcomes were developed to align with the English department's First-Year Writing Program Objectives.² In addition, the committee proposed adding outcomes that evaluated writing quality at the word, sentence, paragraph, and document level, as well as overall progress in writing competency. This process resulted in the following 11 writing outcomes which guided the assessment (see Results Table in section 4 for more detailed descriptions of each outcome).

1. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of purpose.
2. The student's writing demonstrates awareness of audience.
3. The student's writing reflects awareness of rhetorical choices.
4. The student's portfolio demonstrates genre awareness.
5. The student conducts and incorporates primary research.
6. The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.
7. The student's writing demonstrates control of paragraph structure.
8. The student's writing demonstrates control of document-level structure.
9. The student's writing demonstrates control of Standard American English structure and usage.
10. The student's writing reflects command of appropriate writing conventions.
11. Overall impression of student's progress in writing.

2.3 Evaluators

The evaluators were the following English faculty and graduate teaching assistants: Matt Burleson, Brielle Campos, Eric Carpenter, Karine Gavand, Amy Harris-Aber, Jennifer Kates, Robert Lawrence, Jennifer Marchant, Adam McInturff, Elizabeth Myers, Bellee Jones-Pierce, Jency Wilson, and Matt Zumwalt. Each evaluator was assigned 22 students' writing samples to score and received a \$150 stipend for their service.

2.4 Evaluation Rubric

Evaluators were instructed to examine all three writing samples submitted for each student, and to give a score for each outcome based on the highest level of achievement reflected in at least one of the submissions. Evaluators scored on a 5-point scoring scale as shown below, and each writing sample received two separate scores from two different evaluators on each of the 11 outcomes. Please see Appendix A for more details on how each outcome was scored.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Undeveloped</i> | <i>Developing</i> | <i>Competent</i> | <i>Mature</i> | <i>Exemplary</i> |

¹ The Assessment Outcomes Committee consisted of the following ENGL 1010 instructors: Pam Davis, Laney Jolley, Jennifer Kates, Alyson Lynn, Adam McInturff, Shelia McGhee, Candie Moonshower, Zabby Myers, Bob Petersen, Aaron Shapiro, Savanna Teague, and Matt Zumwalt.

² <https://www.mtsu.edu/genedenglish/docs/GEEObjectives17.pdf>

2.5 Interrater reliability

The evaluators participated in a grade norming session on January 22, 2021 facilitated by the English department's General Education Assessment Coordinator. During this session, the readers evaluated and discussed sets of writing samples from five students whose writing competence had been assessed in AY 2019-2020. This session also served the purpose of providing year-to-year assessment calibration. The grade norming session consisted of the following steps:

1. *Examination* (each reader examined a student's submissions)
2. *Clarifying questions* (the team discussed any questions raised by the submissions under review)
3. *Scoring* (readers independently and silently scored the writing samples in terms of the 11 writing outcomes)
4. *Score sharing* (for each outcome, each reader shared their score and the facilitator recorded it)
5. *Calibration* (for each outcome, the facilitator shared the scores by the two evaluators in AY 2019-2020)
6. *Discussion* (evaluators explained and justified their scores for each outcome and discussed their interpretations of the scoring rubric in relation to each outcome and in relation to student performance)
7. *Debriefing* (the session ended with additional discussion of the outcomes which reflected a significant variance of scores)

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 procedures described above do not represent any significant changes from the previous year's assessment.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in table format.

4.1 Overall results (n=160)

| Outcome | Undeveloped | Developing | Competent | Mature | Exemplary |
|--|-------------|------------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| 1. A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample. | 1% | 11% | 40.5% | 36.5% | 11% |
| 2. The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience. | 1.3% | 19.2% | 41% | 34% | 4.5% |
| 3. The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation. | 1.3% | 25% | 42.4% | 26.2% | 5.1% |
| 4. The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres. ³ | 0% | 22.5% | 36.5% | 32% | 9% |
| 5. The score reflects a student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing. ⁴ | 3.5% | 19.5% | 47% | 24.5% | 5.5% |

³ Note: The results reported for this outcome reflect scores on the submissions of 146 of the 160 students in the sample. For the other 14 students in the sample, the evaluators indicated that the writing assignments submitted did not provide adequate evidence to judge genre awareness.

⁴ Note: The results reported for this outcome reflect scores on the submissions of 137 of the 160 students in the sample. For the other 23 students in the sample, the evaluators indicated that none of the three writing assignments submitted for those students incorporated primary research as a requirement.

| | | | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 6. <i>The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.</i> | 1% | 12% | 47% | 33% | 7% |
| 7. <i>The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence.</i> | 0% | 18.5% | 41% | 31% | 9.5% |
| 8. <i>The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation.</i> | 0% | 16% | 43% | 33% | 8% |
| 9. <i>The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of diction.</i> | 1% | 13% | 37.5% | 38.5% | 10% |
| 10. <i>The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization.</i> | 1.5% | 16.5% | 45% | 29% | 8% |
| 11. <i>Overall progress in writing (1=no progress, 5=substantial progress)</i> | 13% | 28% | 36% | 21% | 2% |

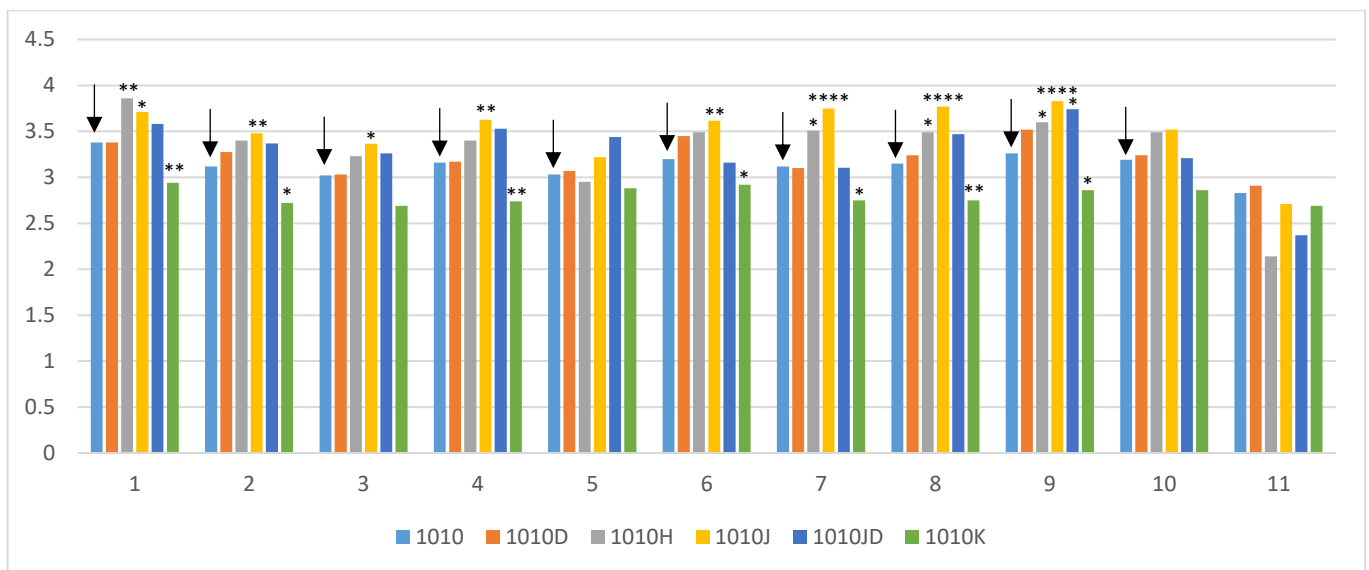
4.2 Mean Scores by Section Type

| Outcome | 1010 n = 60 | 1010D n = 15 | 1010H n = 15 | 1010J n = 30 | 1010JD n = 15 | 1010K n = 20 | 1010KD n = 2 | 1010L n = 3 |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample.</i> | 3.38 | 3.38 | 3.86 | 3.71 | 3.58 | 2.94 | 4 | 3.17 |
| 2. <i>The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience.</i> | 3.12 | 3.275 | 3.40 | 3.48 | 3.37 | 2.72 | 3.5 | 3.17 |
| 3. <i>The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation.</i> | 3.02 | 3.03 | 3.23 | 3.365 | 3.26 | 2.69 | 3.75 | 3.17 |
| 4. <i>The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres.</i> | 3.16 | 3.17 | 3.40 | 3.625 | 3.53 | 2.74 | 3.25 | 3.17 |
| 5. <i>The score reflects a student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing.</i> | 3.03 | 3.07 | 2.95 | 3.22 | 3.44 | 2.88 | 3.25 | 3.17 |
| 6. <i>The student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate formatting and presentation.</i> | 3.2 | 3.45 | 3.49 | 3.615 | 3.16 | 2.92 | 3.75 | 3.83 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| 7. The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence. | 3.12 | 3.10 | 3.51 | 3.75 | 3.105 | 2.75 | 4 | 3.83 |
| 8. The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation. | 3.15 | 3.24 | 3.49 | 3.77 | 3.47 | 2.75 | 3.75 | 3.83 |
| 9. The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of diction. | 3.26 | 3.52 | 3.60 | 3.83 | 3.74 | 2.86 | 4 | 3.66 |
| 10. The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization. | 3.19 | 3.24 | 3.49 | 3.52 | 3.21 | 2.86 | 4 | 3 |
| 11. Overall progress in writing (1=no progress, 5=substantial progress) | 2.83 | 2.91 | 2.14 | 2.71 | 2.37 | 2.69 | 3.25 | 3.5 |

The following chart reflects the statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the samples of students enrolled in honors, distance, or dual enrollment sections and the mean score of the sample of students enrolled in a traditional 1010 section. The evaluators were blinded to section type when scoring submissions.

Note: The arrows point to the comparison standard for each of the 10 writing outcomes assessed, and * = $p \leq 0.05$, ** = $p \leq 0.01$, *** = $p \leq 0.001$, and **** = $p \leq 0.0001$ respectively and reflect Welch t-test two-tailed p values.



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?

5.1 Summary of overall results

The overall results reflect that the writing outcomes assessed were attained by more than 74% of the students in our sample by the completion of ENGL 1010. Specifically, the percent of students in the sample performing at a **competent** level and **above** ranged from 74% to 88% across all the learning outcomes assessed. In fact, only one writing outcome reflects a comparatively lower level of attainment (with 73.7% of the sample performing at a competent level or above compared to all other outcomes which ranged from 78% to 88%), and this writing skill (i.e., *The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation*) requires both ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020 to be developed fully. It is, therefore, no surprise that a larger number of students in the sample were still developing this skill at the conclusion of ENGL 1010. Additionally, for all but one outcome, the percent of the sample performing at the **undeveloped** level was only between 0% and 1.5%. Our assumption is that a small number of students may have been unable or unwilling to devote themselves to improving their writing skills in the relevant areas. In the case of outcome 5, the percent of the sample performing at the **undeveloped** level was 3.5% which is significantly higher than the rest, but the relevant skill (i.e., *conducting and effectively incorporating primary research in a writing assignment*) is one of the more advanced writing course objectives in ENGL 1010 so it does not surprise us that 3.5% of students would find themselves struggling with that skill. Finally, to shed more light into the group of students in the **developing** column, we conducted between-sections statistical analyses to identify the subpopulation of students in the sample contributing to this finding (see 5.2 below).

5.2 Summary of between sections comparisons

The between sections statistical analyses revealed that the subpopulation of students in 1010K prescribed sections contributed most significantly to lower levels of attainment in seven of the ten writing outcomes. When compared to the sample of students in regular 1010 sections, students in prescribed 1010K sections had significantly lower mean scores (at $p \leq 0.05$ or $p \leq 0.01$ levels of significance) in relation to outcomes 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9. This is an expected finding. Students with ACT scores lower than 19 in reading or lower than 18 in English are required to register in ENGL 1010K. Many of these students are non-native writers of English, and, as expected, their writing skills, when assessed, would place them in the developing column. Keeping in mind that evaluators are blinded to section type when evaluating writing samples, it is also not surprising that students from K sections would receive low scores when evaluated within a sample of a population of writers which also includes honors students.

In addition, we compared the performance of students in ENGL 1010D online sections as well as ENGL 1010J dual enrollment sections to that of students in the traditional 1010 sections. The statistical analyses revealed

- i. no statistically significant differences in attainment in relation to any of the writing outcomes when comparing face-to-face and online sections of 1010, and
- ii. high school students in dual enrollment sections had significantly higher mean scores in relation to writing outcomes 1 and 3 ($p \leq 0.05$), 2, 4, 6 ($p \leq 0.01$), and 7 – 9 ($p \leq 0.0001$) when compared to MTSU students in traditional ENGL 1010 sections.

Finally, as expected, students in the honors sections had significantly higher mean scores in relation to writing outcomes 1 ($p \leq 0.01$) and 7 – 9 ($p \leq 0.05$) when compared to students in non-honors ENGL 1010 sections,

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

We are glad to see that despite the incredible challenges presented to students and faculty during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, the vast majority of students (74-88%) performed at a competent level or above in their ENGL 1010 courses. We are also not surprised to see that the one outcome in which students performed a bit lower (73.7-88%) was arguably the most challenging: *The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation*. This is the lifetime work of writing development, and though we hope that students build this skill over the course of their work in ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020, we recognize that this skill must be iteratively addressed across the curriculum. We hope that in the move to new General Education Outcomes, faculty across the disciplines will support student learning in developing and supporting their rhetorical understandings of writing projects. Those of us in the General Education English office are eager to work with interdisciplinary colleagues to support student understandings of rhetorical situations across their writing experiences. We have designed extensive training to support this work and would be happy to work with General Education to scale up this support.

Although all of the outcomes are important, and we take these results seriously in planning for professional development and revising curriculum, perhaps the most important outcome is the last one: *Overall progress in writing*. We're glad to see relative parity here across sections with the exception of the Honors sections, in which students did not progress as much as their peers. Arguably this is an expected finding since it can be difficult for students who perform at a high level to demonstrate improvement, but we think it is worth addressing nonetheless. In our discussion of these findings with program faculty, we will focus on the use of high impact practices and explicit discussion with students about overall progress as a way to begin a conversation about potential strategies to address this discrepancy.

Although students whose portfolios included primary research demonstrated competence, we will address the finding that 23 students did not produce work that included evidence of this outcome. Similarly, 14 students did not produce work that demonstrated genre awareness. This tracks with previous year findings as well as descriptive data gathered from faculty in our program. Genre and primary research are two components of our revised curriculum with which some faculty may not feel comfortable. Although we've designed professional development to clarify these components of the curriculum, during remote learning fewer faculty participated in professional development and may have not had access to discussions intended to support this integration in the curriculum. To ensure that the curriculum and attendant changes are communicated effectively and accessibly, we have applied for support to create an OER text for ENGL 1010 to help with continuity across sections, particularly regarding how to support the teaching of primary research methods and genre awareness. The use of OER would also address a weakness not addressed in this assessment report: the difficulty students have in purchasing the assigned course text in the first week of the semester. Success in college courses is dependent on having the necessary resources, including course texts. For students reliant on financial aid (most of our MTSU students, and particularly those from underrepresented communities who disproportionately are placed into 1010K), they must wait until the semester is underway to purchase course texts. The use of OER would obviate this concern for students while simultaneously better supporting our faculty in meeting course objectives.

We eagerly looked forward to the Academic Year 2020-2021 for many reasons, one of which was that we hoped we might gather data from ENGL 1010 in a relatively "normal" year so that we could compare these results to our findings from the Academic Year 2019-2020. Of course, this was not the case. There are so many variables impacting student performance, particularly in the first-semester writing courses, that, though we are

responding to these findings and designing strategies for improvement (detailed in this section and particularly in section 8), we are careful not to overgeneralize these findings. We were glad to see that the lower scores of dual enrollment students in our previous year's assessment were not repeated in this year's findings. In fact, students in DE were successful across outcomes in this assessment, particularly those that represent semantic and grammatical adherence to SWE convention.

Yet we are struck by some of the lower scores across outcomes of 1010 and 1010D sections in comparison to other course types. In Fall 2021, we asked all students in first-year writing courses to complete our pilot Guided Self Placement (GSP) instrument as a way to verify the tool. GSP uses multiple measures to recommend placement for students, including test scores, high school GPA, self-assessment, and learning preferences. In surveying students this fall about their reading and writing experiences, we learned that many students (15 % of the 1000 respondents) placed by ACT score into 1010 *would prefer* to be in a more supported course, such as 1010K. This suggests that the lower scores in ENGL 1010 may be related to students needing more support than the ENGL 1010 course is designed to provide. ENGL 1010K may provide a better option for some students to be successful.

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

These assessment findings, as well as our experiences with students and faculty during the pandemic, demonstrated a need to offer accessible professional development outside of regular channels for faculty. Many faculty, and particularly graduate students, regularly attend annual orientation and curriculum meetings offered each semester. However, there are many faculty who aren't able to attend such events, and because of the high teaching load for all faculty, we needed additional ways to make the course objectives clear, especially those related to primary research and genre. Below is a list of plans we implemented to correct deficiencies from the previous assessment:

1. Given the success of students in online English courses as well as student needs during the pandemic, we significantly increased our online offerings for both regular admission students as well as Dual Enrollment students. Further, to provide more flexibility for students and faculty, and to capitalize on the affordances of both online and in-person class, we increased our web-assisted and hybrid course offerings.
2. We worked tirelessly with the Dual Enrollment office and DE faculty to clarify the program offerings to students and ensure their understanding of college expectations. Although the pool of students that participated in the program was smaller during this academic year, it seems that they were more college ready based on our assessment findings. Also, our work in improving communication may have impacted these successes.
3. We designed professional development in the form of a web series, regular curriculum meetings, weekly open office hours, course observations, and Open Education Resources (OER) to target weaknesses and provide effective models of student writing.
4. During the annual General Education English Orientation in August 2020, the department's General Education Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Aleka Blackwell, presented assessment findings to the faculty. We discussed resources to address weaknesses as demonstrated in the report.
5. We shared findings with the General Education English Committee and have designed supportive materials, including curriculum course maps and curricular timelines to make the curriculum more accessible to students and faculty.
6. In this iteration of the assessment, the Assessment Coordinator balanced the samples further such that the findings are based on more than 1-3 students in each course, which was the limitation of our initial ENGL 1010 assessment.

7. To better understand ENGL1010K students and placement in General Education English courses we have piloted a Guided Self Placement Instrument and developed a related IRB approved study. This study investigates the impact that being placed into a prescribed course has on student agency, confidence, and other affective components. We began data collection in Fall 2021.

8. Looking ahead

Although we will turn our attention in next year's Assessment Report to the ENGL 1020 course, we will continue to evaluate student and faculty success in ENGL 1010. We will also continue the following initiatives that are intended to better meet the needs of students and faculty in ENGL 1010 based on these findings:

1. We will continue to scale up the use of GSP. The Admissions and Standards Committee approved the use of GSP for students who do not have valid test scores or who would like to verify their course placement. We have applied for a TBR SERS grant to complete usability testing of the tool with students in early arrival programs and as a tool for building their confidence in course selection and writing practice. Preliminary results suggest that GSP might place students more effectively, thus offering a more supportive version of ENGL 1010 to students who might benefit from this course design. In the longterm such change has the potential to reduce stigma around getting support for writing; it has done so in universities that have implemented GSP on a large scale.
2. We will expand our use of OER across the first-year writing courses to offer broader support to faculty, early and low-cost access to course texts for students, and exemplary models of student writing.
3. We have continued to gather data per our IRB-approved study regarding student affective responses to being placed in prescribed classes. We publish these findings in the coming year and triangulate this work with our validation of our GSP tool.

APPENDIX A
General Education Writing Outcomes Assessment
English Department
Scoring Instructions

- A. We are not conducting portfolio assessment. We collected multiple documents from each student because there is no single *end-of-semester* comparable writing task that we could collect from *all students* to perform an outcomes assessment for ENGL 1010. We collected several writing samples from each student to give us a variety of writing assignments and opportunities for students to shine.
- B. Please examine all the submissions for evidence of performance for each outcome/course objective listed below, and score based on the highest level of achievement reflected in at least one of the writing samples. Writing samples produced at the end of the semester might reflect the highest level of performance (assuming progress in writing ability throughout the semester) and may, therefore, weigh most heavily in your scoring.
- C. Within each set of submissions, the assignment instructions are included for your reference, but you can score the writing samples independent of the assignment requirements. Keep in mind that we are not evaluating whether students can follow directions. We are using the samples to level of performance in relation to each specific writing outcome.
- D. The standard of performance for all the evaluation areas listed below should reflect expectations of performance at the completion of a first-semester English composition course at the college level. Please apply the 1-5 scale to measure a student’s performance with that standard in mind. As you know, we evaluate ENGL 1020 separately, and we are planning an outcomes assessment for ENGL 2020/2030. This assessment is meant to inform the department about the progress made by students in ENGL 1010 specifically.

Scoring Scale

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| <i>Undeveloped</i> | <i>Developing</i> | <i>Competent</i> | <i>Mature</i> | <i>Exemplary</i> |

OUTCOMES 1-3

Instructions: Score each of these 3 items BASED ON THE WRITING SAMPLE WHICH REFLECTS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF COMPETENCE ACHIEVED BY THE STUDENT FOR THE ITEM (1= no evidence. 5 = the highest level of performance normally seen among the top students at the conclusion of ENGL 1010). The goal is to determine the upper limits of performance in each of these areas for each student; you can, therefore, use a different submission for each item.

1. The student’s writing demonstrates awareness of **purpose**.
(A central idea and a clarity of purpose are exhibited throughout the writing sample.)
2. The student’s writing demonstrates awareness of **audience**.
(The writer appeals to a particular audience by choosing and maintaining a voice which reflects an understanding of the needs and/or biases of that specific audience.)
3. The student’s writing reflects awareness of **rhetorical choices**.
(The writer employs modes of persuasion and/or rhetorical devices appropriate to the rhetorical situation.)

OUTCOME 4

Instructions: Score the following item based on the whole portfolio. Evaluate the extent to which the student has developed an understanding of genre-specific conventions for at least two genres. Note: If the assignments were not designed to reflect the student's development of genre awareness, please enter NA for this item for this student.

4. The student's portfolio demonstrates **genre awareness**.
(The student analyzes and/or attempts to write in a variety of genres.)

OUTCOME 5

Instructions: Score the following item based on a relevant writing sample.

5. The student conducts and incorporates **primary research**.
(Evaluate the student's ability to conduct relevant primary research and to incorporate primary research in his/her writing. Primary research is information collected by the student by means of interviews, observations, surveys, analyses of trends, etc.)

OUTCOME 6

Instructions: Score the following item based on the whole portfolio.

6. Student's writing reflects assignment-appropriate **formatting** and **presentation**.

OUTCOMES 7-10

Instructions: When scoring the following items, please weigh the writing sample submitted closest to the end of the semester more heavily in your scoring.

7. Student's writing demonstrates control of **paragraph structure**.
(The student's writing reflects paragraph unity and coherence.)
8. Student's writing demonstrates control of **document-level structure**.
(The student's writing reflects an effective organization, including introductions and conclusions, appropriate to the genre and rhetorical situation.)
9. Student's writing demonstrates control of **Standard American English structure and usage**.
(The student's writing reflects effective use of SAE, both in terms of sentence structure and in terms of diction.)
10. Student's writing reflects command of appropriate **writing conventions**.
(The student's writing reflects knowledge of punctuation rules and attention to spelling and capitalization.)

FINAL AREA OF EVALUATION

11. Overall impression of **student progress**.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = no progress; 5 = substantial progress), how much progress in the student's writing ability is reflected by the portfolio (i.e., when comparing the writing in the first vs. the last writing assignment submitted)?

Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes

Academic Year: 2020 -2021

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; National = 15.40

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 2020 -2021 score for MTSU students (16) has a slight decrease but is still above the national average (15.40). Comparatively, MTSU scores are still below their 2014-2015 (16.7) and 2013-2014 (16.9) levels.

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.**

MTSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (MT Engage), which was implemented in fall 2016, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, specifically integrative thinking and critical reflection. We will continue to encourage faculty to certify their courses as a MT Engage course.

The Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) continues to offer workshops that help faculty incorporate strategies for improving critical thinking. For example, the LT&ITC continued to offer workshops with a focus on the online and digital environment. Workshop topics included course redesign for increased student engagement, active learning, various workshops on course and assignment design, and experiential learning and 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.