



A Report on the Assessment of Written Communication (AWC)

College of Arts and Media

Fall 2025-Spring 2026

Executive Summary

The College of Arts and Media submitted 168 student writing artifacts for assessment during the 2025–2026 academic year. Results indicate meaningful improvement in student written communication compared to the college's previous assessment cycle in 2022–2023. The overall average score increased from 2.74 to 3.00, with gains observed across all four rubric domains.

Performance Benchmark

The institutional benchmark for written communication is 2.50. The College of Arts and Media exceeded this benchmark across all four rubric domains, achieving an overall average score of 3.00.

Key Findings

- The overall average writing score increased by 0.26 points, reaching 3.00, indicating that student writing performance has moved into a solidly proficient range.
- Improvements were observed in all domains:
 - Content Development: 2.75 → 3.02
 - Organization of Ideas: 2.76 → 2.98
 - Style & Correctness: 2.75 → 2.94
 - Design & Conventions: 2.69 → 3.04
- The School of Music demonstrated the largest improvement among CAM departments, increasing the overall average from 2.57 to 3.19. Substantial gains were observed across all domains, particularly Content Development and Design & Conventions.
- Media and Communication also showed notable growth, particularly in Design & Conventions, which increased from 2.68 to 3.29.
- Art, Dance, and Theatre & Musical Theatre maintained strong performance levels and showed either modest improvements or continued achievement near the college average.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Although scores increased substantially, Style & Correctness remains the lowest-scoring domain at the college level.
- Departmental results suggest opportunities to share successful writing practices from high-performing programs, particularly the School of Music and Media & Communication.
- Continued emphasis on disciplinary writing expectations and editing practices may help raise all domains above the 3.0 benchmark.
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Conclusion

Results demonstrate substantial progress in student writing across the College of Arts and Media. The broad-based improvements across all domains and departments suggest that writing instruction and curricular efforts are positively impacting student performance. Continued attention to writing quality and dissemination of effective departmental practices should help sustain this positive trajectory.

Description of Assessment of Written Communication (AWC)

Each academic year, approximately 500 student writing artifacts are collected and assessed using a locally-developed writing rubric. This rubric was developed by faculty with expertise in teaching and assessing student writing and is assumed to have content-related validity (Banta & Palomba, 2015). Over a three-year period, each academic college at SHSU will participate in the Assessment of Written Communication (AWC) and submit artifacts for scoring. These student artifacts either come directly from courses within those colleges or from required capstone projects; therefore, the artifacts represent authentic student work (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Kuh et al., 2015).

The student data presented within this report reflect student performance regarding the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Core Learning Objective of Communication Skills (THECB, 2018). The THECB (2018) defines Communication Skills as "effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication." Data from this assessment may therefore be used to address the written communication element of the broader concept of Communication Skills. These data should be used in conjunction with other data to fully understand student knowledge and ability regarding this Core Learning Objective.

Methodology

A total of 168 artifacts from upper division courses in the College of Arts and Media were scored as part of this writing assessment by faculty and staff volunteers during a two-day in-person scoring session in June 2026 using a locally developed writing rubric. This rubric was divided into four separate domains: (1) Content Development; (2) Organization of Ideas; (3) Style & Correctness; and (4) Design & Conventions. A copy of this rubric is provided in the Appendix.

Each domain was scored individually on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest. Each artifact was reviewed by two raters, with a third rater introduced when the scores were too far apart (i.e., 1 and 3, 2 and 4, or 1 and 4 for the same domain). The third rater would only score those domains that were not in agreement, although Rater 1 and Rater 2 scores were kept for analysis of domain averages and interrater reliability. The individual domain scores for each student writing artifact were then averaged together to provide a total average score for the artifact.

To support interpretation of results, a benchmark score of 2.50 was established for each rubric domain and the overall average score. Because rubric ratings range from 1 to 4, an average score of 2.50 indicates that students demonstrate the assessed writing characteristics at least at a developing-to-proficient level. Scores at or above 2.50 are considered to have met institutional expectations, while scores below 2.50 indicate an area needing improvement and additional attention.

Score Reliability

A one-way random-effects model was used to calculate the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) based on average measures to determine the level of interrater agreement for each domain of student writing, as well as the overall average scores (Fleiss, 2003; Shrout &

Fleiss, 1979). According to Cicchetti (1994), ICC agreement values below .40 indicate poor agreement, from .40 to .59 indicate fair agreement, from .60 to .74 indicate good agreement, and .75 and above indicate excellent agreement. The agreement values for all domains were fair. A complete breakdown of the ICC agreement values is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Breakdown of ICC Agreement by Domain Area for the College of Arts and Media

Domain Area	Intraclass Correlation for Average Measures
Content Development	.58
Organization of Ideas	.40
Style & Correctness	.49
Design & Conventions	.59
Overall Average	.58

Note. All ICC agreements were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Further, about 90% of artifact domains required scores from only two raters. As previously mentioned, only domains with a two- or three-point difference required a third rater. See Table 2 for a full breakdown of score differences by domain.

Table 2

Percentage of Score Differences by Domain Area for the College of Arts and Media

Domain Area	Score Difference Between Rater 1 and Rater 2			
	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Content Development	44.0%	48.2%	7.7%	0.0%
Organization of Ideas	44.6%	45.2%	10.1%	0.0%
Style & Correctness	42.9%	50.0%	6.5%	0.6%
Design & Conventions	51.8%	42.3%	5.4%	0.6%

Note. $n = 168$. Some domains may not total exactly 100% due to statistical rounding.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the average student score for each domain are provided, as well as the overall average, for the College of Arts and Media and its departments. Comparisons of previous data are also provided for the College and departments. The College of Arts and Media was previously evaluated in 2022-2023. A breakdown of college-level data is in Table 3, and a breakdown of department-level data is in Table 4. Please note that due to rubric revisions in 2025, the domain order changed slightly (e.g., Style was previously listed second but is now listed third). The previous scores in the tables below are appropriately aligned.

For reporting purposes, average scores were evaluated against an institutional benchmark of 2.50. Scores meeting or exceeding 2.50 indicate achievement of the expected level of performance for written communication, while scores below 2.50 suggest opportunities for improvement. The College of Arts and Media exceeded this benchmark in all four rubric domains and achieved an overall average score of 3.00.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance for the College of Arts and Media

Domain Area	2022-2023 AWC Scores			2025-2026 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Content Development	216	2.75	0.60	168	3.02	0.68
Organization of Ideas	216	2.76	0.59	168	2.98	0.60
Style & Correctness	216	2.75	0.56	168	2.94	0.63
Design & Conventions	216	2.69	0.56	168	3.04	0.65
Overall Average	216	2.74	0.48	168	3.00	0.54

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance by Department for Arts and Media*

Department	2022-2023 AWC Scores			2025-2026 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Art						
Content Development	62	2.75	0.53	48	2.86	0.63
Organization of Ideas	62	2.73	0.57	48	2.82	0.61
Style & Correctness	62	2.86	0.51	48	2.88	0.60
Design & Conventions	62	2.69	0.55	48	2.75	0.64
Overall Average	62	2.76	0.44	48	2.83	0.54
Dance						
Content Development	53	2.93	0.54	9	2.72	0.62
Organization of Ideas	53	2.76	0.60	9	2.89	0.42
Style & Correctness	53	2.76	0.59	9	3.00	0.35
Design & Conventions	53	2.75	0.59	9	2.78	0.56
Overall Average	53	2.80	0.48	9	2.85	0.29
Media and Communication						
Content Development	36	2.96	0.63	24	2.94	0.73
Organization of Ideas	36	2.76	0.64	24	2.92	0.69
Style & Correctness	36	2.81	0.59	24	2.90	0.74
Design & Conventions	36	2.68	0.63	24	3.29	0.55
Overall Average	36	2.80	0.52	24	3.01	0.59
School of Music						
Content Development	51	2.44	0.61	48	3.28	0.65
Organization of Ideas	51	2.71	0.58	48	3.18	0.56
Style & Correctness	51	2.52	0.49	48	3.08	0.62
Design & Conventions	51	2.62	0.53	48	3.22	0.60
Overall Average	51	2.57	0.45	48	3.19	0.50
Theatre and Musical Theatre						
Content Development	14	2.64	0.60	39	3.01	0.70
Organization of Ideas	14	3.04	0.60	39	3.00	0.56
Style & Correctness	14	2.93	0.62	39	2.86	0.66
Design & Conventions	14	2.79	0.54	39	3.09	0.68
Overall Average	14	2.85	0.55	39	2.99	0.53

Discussion

The College of Arts and Media demonstrated substantial improvement in written communication performance since its previous assessment cycle, with the overall average increasing from 2.74 to 3.00. The college exceeded the institutional benchmark in all domains and achieved scores at or near 3.0 across the rubric, reflecting strong student performance in written communication. Particularly notable were improvements in Design & Conventions and Content Development, suggesting that students are becoming more effective in both the

presentation and development of their ideas. Department-level results revealed several areas of exceptional growth, most notably in the School of Music, which exhibited substantial gains across all domains. Media and Communication also demonstrated strong performance, particularly in Design & Conventions. Although improvements were made throughout the college, Style & Correctness remained slightly below the college's highest performing domains, indicating a potential area for continued emphasis. Future efforts may focus on sharing successful writing practices from high-performing departments and continuing to support discipline-specific writing experiences that reinforce effective communication skills.

Recommendations for Improvement

The College of Arts and Media demonstrated strong performance and significant growth; however, opportunities remain for continued improvement.

1. **Maintain successful writing practices in high-performing departments.** The substantial gains observed within the School of Music and strong performance in Media and Communication suggest that effective instructional strategies are in place and may be beneficial to share across the college.
2. **Continue emphasizing Style & Correctness.** Although this domain improved, it remained slightly below the college's highest performing domains. Additional opportunities for revision, editing, and discipline-specific writing feedback may further enhance student performance.
3. **Expand opportunities for writing intensive assignments.** Continued engagement in authentic disciplinary writing can help sustain improvements across all domains and reinforce writing expectations throughout the curriculum.
4. **Document and disseminate successful interventions.** Departments demonstrating notable improvement should be encouraged to share curricular and instructional practices that contributed to increased student achievement.

Collectively, the findings suggest that students are meeting institutional expectations for written communication and that ongoing efforts to integrate writing throughout the curriculum are contributing to measurable improvements in student performance. Continued attention to disciplinary writing conventions, targeted support for developing areas, and dissemination of effective instructional practices will help sustain and advance these gains in future assessment cycles.

References

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- Kuh, G. D., Ikenberry, S. O., Jankowski, N. A., Cain, T. R., Ewell, P. T., Hutchings, P., & Kinzie, J. (2015). *Using evidence of student learning to improve higher education*. Jossey-Bass.
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- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). *Texas core curriculum*. <https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/elements-of-the-texas-core-curriculum/>

Appendix
Writing Assessment Rubric

Writing Assessment Rubric

This rubric asks you to identify features of the writing present in the sample. You should apply the numerical score based on degree of presence of the characteristic features. The writing features selected for the rubric are those most likely present in any disciplinary writing sample and represent a writing level expected of a senior-level college student.

Legend:

- 4 = features are most always present
- 3 = features are often present
- 2 = features are not often present
- 1 = few features are present

CATEGORY

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

Content Development <i>What ideas are presented and how fully they are developed.</i> Features may include reasoning, evidence, detail, development, and research.	• Assignment addresses the requirements of the prompt and demonstrates awareness of the intended audience • Central subject or argument is easily identified and supported with evidence, as appropriate • Reasoning is fully developed with logical examples, details, and evidence, as appropriate • Sources, when appropriate, are effectively integrated to support the argument • Assignment contains information that addresses counterarguments, biases, or reader's expectations, as appropriate
Organization of Ideas <i>How ideas are arranged and connected.</i> Features may include the overall structure of ideas, thoughtful paragraphing, logical flow, and effective transitions.	• Text is purposefully organized and sufficiently developed in a way that clarifies the purpose and argument • Arrangement of ideas (overall structure) is clear, logical, and appropriate to the assignment, allowing the reader to follow the progression of ideas easily • Paragraphs and sections are cohesive and logically connected, with transitions that guide readers • Sentence structure supports readability and effective flow of ideas
Style & Correctness <i>How language choices communicate to readers.</i> Features may include tone, word choice, sentence structure, and errors.	• Writing tone is appropriate for the audience, purpose, and context • Word choice is appropriate to the writing task and intended audience • Writing is clear, concise, and appropriate for audience • Grammar and mechanics support the reader's understanding without distracting errors
Design & Conventions <i>How the document is formatted and presented.</i> Features may include document design and expected format and conventions for the genre.	• Document is well-designed to ensure readability and navigation • Visual layout and design features are consistent throughout the document • Format follows assignment and genre requirements • In-text citations and reference documentation consistently follow required citation style