



A Report on the Assessment of Written Communication (AWC)

College Business Administration

Fall 2025-Spring 2026

Executive Summary

The College of Business Administration submitted 180 student writing artifacts for assessment during the 2025–2026 academic year. Results indicate the largest improvement among participating colleges, with the overall average score increasing from 2.65 in 2021–2022 to 3.01 in 2025–2026. These findings suggest significant gains in students' ability to communicate effectively in written business contexts.

Performance Benchmark

The institutional benchmark for written communication is 2.50. The College of Business Administration exceeded this benchmark in all four rubric domains and achieved an overall average score of 3.01, the highest improvement among participating colleges.

Key Findings

- The overall average writing score increased by 0.36 points, representing the greatest improvement among the participating colleges.
- All assessed domains showed meaningful gains:
 - Content Development: 2.67 → 3.06
 - Organization of Ideas: 2.75 → 3.11
 - Style & Correctness: 2.60 → 2.98
 - Design & Conventions: 2.61 → 2.90
- Organization of Ideas emerged as the strongest domain, with an average score of 3.11, indicating students are effectively structuring and communicating business-related arguments and analyses.
- The Department of Management and Marketing, representing the current artifact sample, improved its overall average from 2.66 to 3.01 while exhibiting gains across every assessed domain.
- Scores above 3.0 in Content Development and Organization of Ideas suggest students are demonstrating stronger analytical reasoning, evidence-based support, and professional communication skills. Opportunities for Improvement
- Despite substantial gains, Design & Conventions remains the lowest-performing domain, suggesting opportunities to strengthen attention to formatting, citation practices, and professional presentation standards.
- Continued integration of writing-intensive assignments and discipline-specific feedback may help raise Style & Correctness above the proficiency threshold.
- Future assessment cycles should evaluate the newly reorganized departments to establish baseline performance data and support longitudinal comparisons.

Conclusion

The College of Business Administration demonstrated exceptional improvement in student writing performance across all domains. Results indicate that current instructional practices are successfully supporting students' development as professional communicators and suggest that existing writing initiatives should be maintained and expanded where appropriate.

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 180 artifacts from upper division courses in the College of Business Administration 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 to good. 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 Business Administration

Domain Area	Intraclass Correlation for Average Measures
Content Development	.60
Organization of Ideas	.56
Style & Correctness	.56
Design & Conventions	.66
Overall Average	.69

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

Further, over 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 Business Administration

Domain Area	Score Difference Between Rater 1 and Rater 2			
	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Content Development	51.7%	40.0%	8.3%	0.0%
Organization of Ideas	53.9%	41.7%	3.9%	0.6%
Style & Correctness	47.2%	43.3%	9.4%	0.0%
Design & Conventions	52.2%	42.8%	5.0%	0.0%

Note. $n = 180$. 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 Business Administration was previously evaluated in 2021-2022. They will remain on this new schedule and return to a three-year evaluation cycle. 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 Business Administration exceeded this benchmark in all four rubric domains and achieved an overall average score of 3.01, the highest improvement among participating colleges.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance for the College of Business Administration

Domain Area	2021-2023 AWC Scores			2025-2026 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Content Development	301	2.67	0.73	180	3.06	0.67
Organization of Ideas	301	2.75	0.66	180	3.11	0.60
Style & Correctness	301	2.60	0.70	180	2.98	0.68
Design & Conventions	301	2.61	0.71	180	2.90	0.68
Overall Average	301	2.65	0.60	180	3.01	0.56

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance by Department for Business Administration

Department	2021-2022 AWC			2025-2026 AWC		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Accounting						
Content Development	12	3.17	0.69	-	-	-
Organization of Ideas	12	3.17	0.58	-	-	-
Style & Correctness	12	3.04	0.69	-	-	-
Design & Conventions	12	2.96	0.54	-	-	-
Overall Average	12	3.08	0.49	-	-	-
Economics and International Business						
Content Development	7	2.79	0.39	-	-	-
Organization of Ideas	7	2.93	0.67	-	-	-
Style & Correctness	7	2.64	0.75	-	-	-
Design & Conventions	7	2.50	0.76	-	-	-
Overall Average	7	2.71	0.57	-	-	-
General Business and Finance*						
Content Development	92	2.59	0.74	-	-	-
Organization of Ideas	92	2.66	0.67	-	-	-
Style & Correctness	92	2.47	0.70	-	-	-
Design & Conventions	92	2.58	0.75	-	-	-
Overall Average	92	2.58	0.62	-	-	-
Management, Marketing, and Info Systems**						
Content Development	190	2.67	0.72	180	3.06	0.67
Organization of Ideas	190	2.76	0.66	180	3.11	0.60
Style & Correctness	190	2.63	0.68	180	2.98	0.68
Design & Conventions	190	2.60	0.70	180	2.90	0.68
Overall Average	190	2.66	0.59	180	3.01	0.56

Note. *The former Department of General Business and Finance was split into two separate departments: Business Administration and Entrepreneurship; Finance and Banking. **The former Department of Management, Marketing, and Information Systems was split into two separate departments: Analytics, Information Systems, and Supply Chain; Management and Marketing. Artifacts were only received by the Department of Management and Marketing in 2025-2026.

Discussion

The College of Business Administration exhibited the strongest overall improvement among participating colleges, increasing its overall average score from 2.65 to 3.01. Performance exceeded the institutional benchmark in all domains, and gains were observed consistently across every area of the rubric. Organization of Ideas emerged as the college's strongest domain, suggesting that students are effectively structuring and communicating complex business

concepts and analyses. Improvements in Content Development and Style & Correctness further indicate growth in students' ability to present well-supported arguments using appropriate professional language. These results may reflect the positive impact of writing-intensive assignments and discipline-specific communication expectations embedded within the curriculum. Although Design & Conventions improved considerably, it remained the college's lowest-scoring domain, suggesting that continued attention to professional formatting, citation practices, and document presentation may further strengthen student performance. Overall, the findings demonstrate meaningful progress in students' written communication abilities and suggest that current instructional approaches are effectively preparing students for professional communication in business settings.

Recommendations for Improvement

The College of Business Administration achieved the largest gains among participating colleges, demonstrating strong evidence of improvement in student written communication.

1. **Sustain current writing initiatives.** The substantial increases observed across all domains suggest that existing instructional and curricular practices are effectively supporting the development of written communication skills and should be continued.
2. **Strengthen professional communication conventions.** While Design & Conventions improved considerably, it remained the lowest scoring domain. Additional emphasis on professional document formatting, citation practices, and business communication standards may further improve performance.
3. **Establish baseline assessment data for newly reorganized departments.** As departmental structures have changed since the previous assessment cycle, future data collection should support meaningful longitudinal comparisons across the new organizational structure.
4. **Continue embedding writing within discipline-specific assignments.** The strong gains in Content Development and Organization of Ideas suggest that authentic business writing tasks benefit students and should remain an integral component of the curriculum.

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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- 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. Features may include reasoning, evidence, detail, development, and research.</i>	• 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. Features may include the overall structure of ideas, thoughtful paragraphing, logical flow, and effective transitions.</i>	• 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. Features may include tone, word choice, sentence structure, and errors.</i>	• 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. Features may include document design and expected format and conventions for the genre.</i>	• 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