



Office of Assessment
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

A Report of the Assessment of Written Communication (AWC)

College of Health Sciences

Fall 2022-Spring 2023

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, 2023). The THECB (2023) 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 218 artifacts from upper division courses in the College of Health Sciences were scored as part of this writing assessment by faculty and staff volunteers during a two-day in-person scoring session in July 2023 using a locally-developed writing rubric. This rubric was divided into four separate domains: (1) Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis; (2) Style; (3) Organization; and (4) Conventions. A copy of this rubric is provided in the Appendix. Each domain was scored individually from 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest. Each artifact was reviewed by two raters, with a third rater introduced when the scores were too far out of agreement (i.e., a score of 1 and 4 for the same domain). The third rater would only score those domains that were not in agreement, and the two closest scores would be kept. The individual domain scores for each student writing artifact were then averaged together to provide a total average score for the artifact.

Score Reliability

Intraclass correlational coefficients (ICCs) were calculated to determine the level of inter-rater 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 are to be interpreted as demonstrating poor agreement, from .40 to .59 as demonstrating fair agreement, .60 to .74 as demonstrating good agreement, and .75 and above as demonstrating excellent agreement. The agreement values for all four of the individual writing domains were in the fair range. The overall average score was .60 indicating good agreement. A complete breakdown of the ICC agreement values can be found in Table 1.

Table 1*Breakdown of ICC Agreement by Domain Area*

Domain Area	Intraclass Correlation for Average Measures
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	.52
Style	.47
Organization	.47
Conventions	.49
Overall Average	.60

Results

Descriptive statistics are provided of the average student score for each domain, as well as the overall average, for the College of Health Sciences and its departments. Comparisons to previous data are also provided for the college and departments. The College of Health Sciences was previously evaluated in 2020-2021, which was postponed from 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A full breakdown of college-level data can be found in Table 2. A breakdown of department-level data for the College of Health Sciences can be found in Table 3.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance for the College of Health Sciences*

Domain Area	2020-2021 AWC Scores			2022-2023 AWC Scores		
	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	290	2.61	0.66	218	2.66	0.63
Style	290	2.75	0.60	218	2.60	0.57
Organization	290	2.79	0.62	218	2.62	0.62
Conventions	290	2.65	0.62	218	2.51	0.62
Overall Average	290	2.70	0.55	218	2.60	0.51

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance by Department for Health Sciences*

Department	2020-2021 AWC Scores			2022-2023 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Human Sciences						
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	97	2.61	0.60	31	2.86	0.70
Style	97	2.71	0.57	31	2.71	0.62
Organization	97	2.86	0.55	31	2.63	0.73
Conventions	97	2.56	0.57	31	2.58	0.70
Overall Average	97	2.68	0.49	31	2.69	0.61
Kinesiology						
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	22	2.59	0.50	70	2.62	0.62
Style	22	2.59	0.65	70	2.48	0.59
Organization	22	2.50	0.60	70	2.58	0.66
Conventions	22	2.39	0.53	70	2.37	0.57
Overall Average	22	2.52	0.49	70	2.51	0.51
Public Health						
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	117	2.50	0.71	44	2.60	0.62
Style	117	2.68	0.65	44	2.50	0.57
Organization	117	2.62	0.68	44	2.51	0.61
Conventions	117	2.65	0.68	44	2.30	0.65
Overall Average	117	2.61	0.60	44	2.48	0.52
School of Nursing						
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis	54	2.84	0.64	73	2.64	0.60
Style	54	3.04	0.46	73	2.72	0.49
Organization	54	3.14	0.43	73	2.72	0.55
Conventions	54	2.94	0.48	73	2.75	0.52
Overall Average	54	2.99	0.42	73	2.71	0.44

Note. The Department of Human Sciences was previously the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, and the Department of Public Health was previously the Department of Population Health.

References

- Banta, T. W., & Palomba, C. A. (2015). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
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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. (2023). Texas Core Curriculum. Retrieved from: <https://www.highered.texas.gov/institutional-resources-programs/public-universities-health-related-institutions/transfer-resources/texas-core-curriculum-tcc/>

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: N/A = Not Applicable
 1 = few features are present
 2 = features are not often present
 3 = features are often present
 4 = features are most always present

CATEGORY	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
Ideas/Critical Thinking/Synthesis <i>The depth of sophistication of thoughts and ideas.</i> Features may include research, reasoning, evidence, detail, and development (appropriate to the field and genre)	• Central subject or argument of the assignment is easily identified, clearly emphasized, consistent with the evidence, and intriguing • Reasoning is fully developed throughout the assignment with logical examples, details, and evidence where and as appropriate • Assignment contains information that addresses counterarguments, biases, or reader's expectations as appropriate
Style <i>The choices the writer makes for specific audiences.</i> Features may include word choice, tone, and sentence length and structure	• Sustained awareness of audience throughout the assignment • Writing tone suits the audience and enhances the assignment's purpose • Sentence structure varies according to the content, purpose, and audience • Sentences are consistently clear and logical • Word choice is appropriate to the writing task
Organization <i>The coherence of the writing.</i> Features may include balance and ordering of ideas, flow, transition, and appropriate format (as defined in assignment)	• Text is purposefully organized and substantially developed in a way that clarifies the argument and enhances style • Arrangement of ideas (overall structure) is clear, logical, and compelling as appropriate to the assignment; the reader moves through the text easily • Internal structure is cohesive and coherent; text flows and ideas are clearly and logically connected • Transitions used appropriately • Format is appropriate as defined by the assignment
Conventions <i>Adherence to standard American edited English.</i> Features include grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and documentation.	• Grammar and mechanics support the reader's understanding of the writer's purpose without distracting errors • Documentation style is consistent, if appropriate to assignment • Sources, when appropriate, are effectively integrated into the body of the assignment • Minor errors do not interfere with readability or damage the writer's credibility (as appropriate to the assignment parameters)