



A Report on the Assessment of Written Communication (AWC)

College of Arts and Media
College Business Administration
College of Health Sciences

Fall 2025-Spring 2026

Executive Summary

The Assessment of Written Communication (AWC) evaluates students' written communication skills using authentic writing artifacts collected from upper-division coursework and assessed with a faculty-developed rubric aligned with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Communication Skills Core Objective. During the 2025–2026 assessment cycle, 568 student writing artifacts were evaluated from the College of Arts and Media (CAM; n = 168), College of Business Administration (COBA; n = 180), and College of Health Sciences (COHS; n = 220). Artifacts were scored across four domains: Content Development, Organization of Ideas, Style & Correctness, and Design & Conventions.

Performance Benchmark

The institutional benchmark for the Assessment of Written Communication is an average score of 2.50 or higher for each rubric domain and the overall average score. Scores meeting or exceeding this benchmark indicate that students have demonstrated the expected level of written communication competency. Scores below 2.50 identify areas where additional instructional attention may be warranted. Across all participating colleges, overall average scores met or exceeded the institutional benchmark.

Key Findings

- Student writing performance improved across all three participating colleges compared to their previous assessment cycles. Overall average scores increased from 2.74 to 3.00 in Arts and Media, from 2.65 to 3.01 in Business Administration, and from 2.60 to 2.78 in Health Sciences.
- The College of Business Administration demonstrated the largest overall improvement (+0.36), followed by the College of Arts and Media (+0.26) and the College of Health Sciences (+0.18).
- Across colleges, Content Development and Organization of Ideas generally received the highest scores, indicating students are increasingly able to develop and organize written arguments effectively.
- Design & Conventions remained the lowest-scoring domain in several departments, suggesting continued opportunities to strengthen formatting, documentation practices, citation accuracy, and adherence to disciplinary conventions.
- Notable departmental improvements were observed in the School of Music (overall average increased from 2.57 to 3.19), Public Health (2.48 to 2.82), and Management and Marketing (2.66 to 3.01).

Assessment Quality

Interrater reliability analyses indicated fair-to-good agreement among scorers, with Intraclass Correlation Coefficients ranging from .50 to .64 across domains and for overall scores. More than 90% of scoring decisions required only two raters, providing evidence of generally consistent application of the rubric.

Areas for Continued Improvement

While results indicate meaningful gains in written communication, several opportunities remain:

- Continue emphasizing disciplinary writing instruction, particularly in departments with overall averages below institutional norms.
- Strengthen student performance in Design & Conventions through targeted instruction on formatting, source integration, and citation practices.
- Share effective writing practices from high-performing and high-growth departments with other academic units.
- Continue scorer calibration and training efforts to improve interrater agreement, particularly within the Organization of Ideas and Style & Correctness domains.

Conclusion

The 2025–2026 AWC assessment findings provide evidence of positive growth in student written communication across all participating colleges. Overall results suggest that efforts to embed writing instruction within disciplines are contributing to improved student performance. Continued attention to disciplinary conventions, documentation practices, and cross-college sharing of effective instructional strategies will help sustain and expand these gains in future assessment cycles.

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 568 artifacts collected from upper division courses in 2025-2026 from the College of Arts and Media (CAM; 168), the College of Business Administration (COBA; 180), and the College of Health Sciences (COHS; 220) were scored as part of this writing assessment.

Student writing artifacts were scored by faculty and staff volunteers during a two-day in-person scoring session in June 2026 using a locally developed writing rubric that was revised prior to this scoring session by members of the Writing in the Disciplines Committee. 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

Domain Area	Intraclass Correlation for Average Measures
Content Development	.59
Organization of Ideas	.50
Style & Correctness	.51
Design & Conventions	.63
Overall Average	.64

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

Domain Area	Score Difference Between Rater 1 and Rater 2			
	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
Content Development	46.0%	46.8%	7.2%	0.0%
Organization of Ideas	50.0%	42.3%	7.5%	0.5%
Style & Correctness	46.3%	45.1%	8.1%	0.5%
Design & Conventions	47.4%	47.0%	5.3%	0.4%

Note. $n = 568$. Some domains may not total exactly 100% due to statistical rounding.

Results

Descriptive statistics are provided for the average student score for each domain, as well as the overall average, for each college and department participating in this assessment. Comparisons to previous data are also provided for each participating college and department. The College of Business Administration (COBA) was previously evaluated in 2021-2022, and the Colleges of Arts and Media (CAM) and Health Sciences (COHS) were previously evaluated in 2022-2023. COBA will remain on this new schedule and return to a three-year evaluation cycle. A full breakdown of college-level data can be found in Table 3. Department-level breakdowns are as follows: CAM in Table 4, COBA in Table 5, and COHS in Table 6. Please note that due to the rubric revisions in 2025, the domain order changed slightly (e.g., Style was previously listed second but is now 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. All participating colleges and departments met or exceeded the institutional benchmark of 2.50 for overall writing performance, although several departments had individual domain scores near the benchmark that may warrant continued monitoring.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance by College

College	Previous AWC Scores			2025-2026 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Arts and Media						
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
Business Administration						
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
Health Sciences						
Content Development	218	2.66	0.63	220	2.80	0.65
Organization of Ideas	218	2.62	0.62	220	2.82	0.62
Style & Correctness	218	2.60	0.57	220	2.79	0.62
Design & Conventions	218	2.51	0.62	220	2.69	0.70
Overall Average	218	2.60	0.51	220	2.78	0.55

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

Table 5

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.

Table 6*Descriptive Statistics for Student Writing Performance by Department for Health Sciences*

Department	2022-2023 AWC Scores			2025-2026 AWC Scores		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
Human Sciences						
Content Development	31	2.86	0.70	50	3.07	0.64
Organization of Ideas	31	2.63	0.73	50	2.92	0.63
Style & Correctness	31	2.71	0.62	50	2.82	0.66
Design & Conventions	31	2.58	0.70	50	2.71	0.58
Overall Average	31	2.69	0.61	50	2.88	0.56
Kinesiology						
Content Development	70	2.62	0.62	55	2.56	0.74
Organization of Ideas	70	2.58	0.66	55	2.73	0.68
Style & Correctness	70	2.48	0.59	55	2.51	0.69
Design & Conventions	70	2.37	0.57	55	2.36	0.63
Overall Average	70	2.51	0.51	55	2.54	0.60
Public Health						
Content Development	44	2.60	0.62	47	2.88	0.58
Organization of Ideas	44	2.51	0.61	47	2.94	0.62
Style & Correctness	44	2.50	0.57	47	2.90	0.51
Design & Conventions	44	2.30	0.65	47	2.55	0.71
Overall Average	44	2.48	0.52	47	2.82	0.51
School of Nursing						
Content Development	73	2.64	0.60	68	2.73	0.54
Organization of Ideas	73	2.72	0.55	68	2.76	0.56
Style & Correctness	73	2.72	0.49	68	2.90	0.55
Design & Conventions	73	2.75	0.52	68	3.04	0.70
Overall Average	73	2.71	0.44	68	2.86	0.49

Discussion

The 2025–2026 Assessment of Written Communication results indicate continued growth in student writing performance across the participating colleges. All three colleges exceeded the institutional benchmark of 2.50 for each domain and overall average score, suggesting that students are generally demonstrating the expected level of written communication proficiency by the upper-division level. Additionally, all colleges showed improvement compared to their previous assessment cycles, providing evidence that ongoing efforts to integrate writing instruction within disciplinary curricula are positively impacting student learning. The largest gains were observed in the College of Business Administration, followed by the College of Arts and Media and the College of Health Sciences. Across colleges, Content Development and Organization of Ideas emerged as relative strengths, indicating that students are increasingly able to develop, support, and organize their ideas effectively. While Design & Conventions showed improvement in all three colleges, it remained one of the lower-scoring domains in several

departments, suggesting an ongoing opportunity to strengthen students' understanding of disciplinary formatting, citation practices, and professional presentation standards. Overall, the results provide encouraging evidence of student achievement in written communication while highlighting opportunities for continued improvement through targeted instructional and curricular initiatives.

Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the 2025–2026 findings, the following institution-level recommendations are proposed:

1. **Continue integrating writing instruction across the curriculum.** The overall improvements observed across all participating colleges suggest that discipline-specific writing experiences are positively influencing student learning and should be maintained and expanded where appropriate.
2. **Strengthen instruction related to Design & Conventions.** Although scores improved across colleges, this domain remained among the lowest-performing areas in many departments. Greater emphasis on formatting, citation practices, source documentation, and professional presentation standards may further improve performance.
3. **Share effective practices across departments and colleges.** Departments demonstrating substantial improvement may provide valuable models for curricular design, assignment construction, and writing support strategies.
4. **Continue scorer training and calibration efforts.** While interrater reliability was acceptable, enhanced norming and calibration activities may improve consistency across raters and strengthen confidence in assessment results.
5. **Monitor departments with scores near the institutional benchmark.** Targeted support should be provided to departments with domain scores near 2.50 to ensure continued progress in future assessment cycles.

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

- Banta, T. W., & Palomba, C. A. (2015). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Cicchetti, D. V. (1994). Guidelines, criteria, and rules of thumb for evaluating normed and standardized assessment instruments in psychology. *Psychological Assessment*, 6(4), 284–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.6.4.284>
- Fleiss, J. L. (2003). *Statistical methods for rates and proportions* (3rd ed.). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/0471445428>
- 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.
- Shrout, P. E., & Fleiss, J. L. (1979). Intraclass correlations: Uses in assessing rater reliability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 86(2), 420–428. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.86.2.420>
- 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

Legend:

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

Office of Assessment, Assessment of Written Communication (AWC). Updated 6/6/2026