

**General Education Assessment  
2016-17 Results for Written Communication Skills, 200 level Courses**

**Executive Summary**

In May 2017, faculty assessed 40 written artifacts to determine the extent to which students were achieving the specified General Education outcomes of 200-level composition courses. A majority of the artifacts were rated as exceeds or meets standard across all of the outcomes. Recommendations from faculty raters included clarifying expectations for the ENGL 2\*\*C courses and refining assignments to ensure the prompts are aligned with outcomes.

A description of the methodology, results and recommendations can be found in the full report below. Other information, such as the rubric, can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment's website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

**Written Communication Skills, 200 level Report**

As part of Old Dominion University's general education requirement, students must complete the written communication requirements at the lower division level. The lower division written communication skills are taught in the English 200-level composition courses (ENGL 2\*\*C). The criteria approved by Faculty Senate for ENGL 2\*\*C courses includes:

- A. Develop rhetorical knowledge by:
  - Analyzing and drafting a variety of compositions or genres shaped by readers' and writers' practices,
  - Transitioning between situations and contexts by adjusting structure, content, diction, and tone,
  - Matching the capacities of different technologies to a range of audiences and rhetorical situations,
  - Understanding that rhetorical situations differ across communities and disciplines.
- B. Develop critical thinking, reading, and information literacy skills by:
  - Using writing as a tool for critical thinking and reflection,
  - Reading and writing several genres that utilize analysis, reflection, narrative, critique, and argument skills,
  - Locating primary and secondary research materials among library resources and evaluating them for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, and bias,
  - Using strategies to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources,
  - Understanding that thinking, reading, and literacy skills differ across communities and disciplines.
- C. Develop multiple strategies, or composing processes, to draft texts by:
  - Working through multiple drafts of a writing project and reflecting on composing practices,
  - Exploring strategies for the writing process and adapting them for a variety of technologies and modalities,
  - Learning to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress,
  - Understanding that composing strategies and processes differ across communities and disciplines.

D. Develop knowledge of conventions by:

- Refining the understanding of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling,
- Practicing genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics,
- Demonstrating a clear understanding of intellectual property rights and applying citation styles systematically, according to disciplinary conventions,
- Understanding that conventions differ across communities and disciplines.

### Methodology

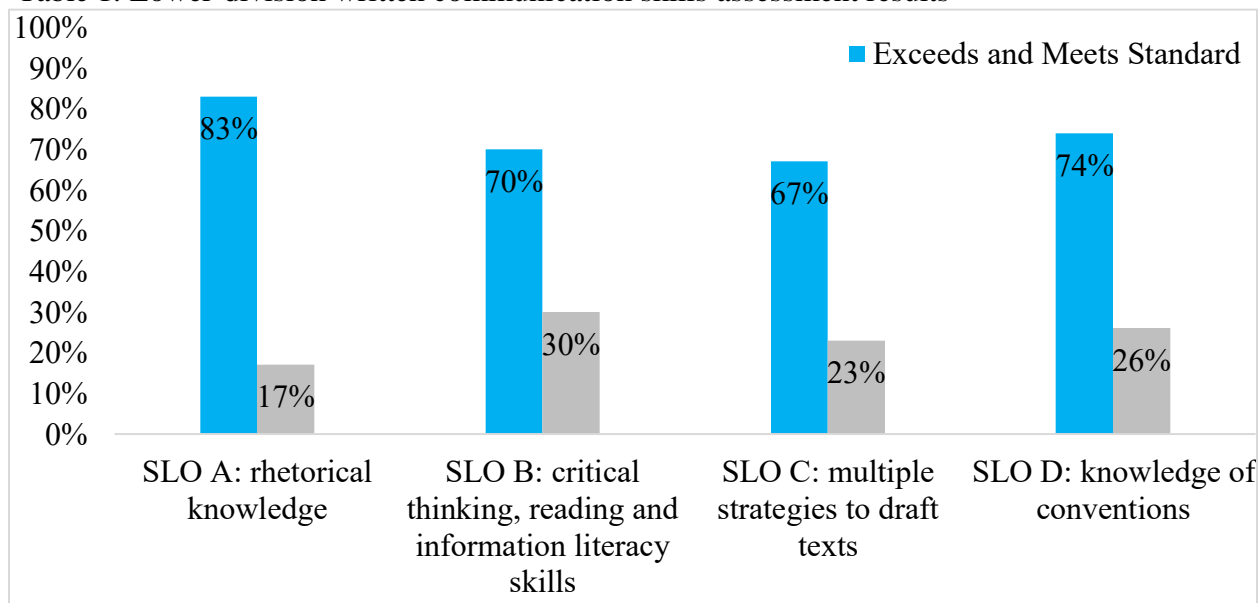
Faculty from the English department created a rubric to assess ENGL 2\*\*C outcomes. A two-day assessment summit was convened in May 2017, where four faculty read and rated a representative random sample of student artifacts from the ENGL 2\*\*C courses. During the morning of the first day, a rubric calibration session was conducted. Faculty first thoroughly reviewed and discussed the rubric and then independently applied the rubric to three sample artifacts. Raters shared their ratings and discussed any differences that arose after each “round” of rating. This discussion helped faculty come to a common understanding of what the student learning outcomes (SLO) meant and what to look for when rating the artifacts using the rubric’s scale: exceeds standard, meets standard, approaches standard, needs attention. Once individual ratings on a shared artifact did not differ by more than one point, raters were given a set of 20 artifacts to rate. The artifacts were read twice by faculty and scored using the rubric. If faculty ratings differed by more than 1 point on the majority of the outcomes, the artifact was sent to a third reader.

None of the artifacts reviewed required a third read due to discrepancies in ratings. A full description of the methodology, including inter-rater reliability data and the rubric can be found on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment’s website: <https://tinyurl.com/geneduc>

### Results

An overview of the findings by SLO is presented in Table 1. A majority of artifacts were rated as exceeds or meets standard on all of the outcomes. The outcome that received the highest rating was SLO A: *develop rhetorical knowledge* (83% exceeds or meets standard).

Table 1. Lower-division written communication skills assessment results



## **Faculty Rater Discussion and Recommendations**

### Discussion

At the end of the second day, faculty were asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of students. Faculty noted that students demonstrated rhetorical knowledge and understanding of genre and audience (SLO A), but seemed to vary by course or assignment design. Additionally students seemed to be able to demonstrate adequate knowledge of conventions (SLO D) with very few errors. Raters comments that using portfolios helped with the assessment of this outcome.

A couple of areas of weakness were identified by faculty. Most notably, the selection of primary and secondary sources (SLO B: *critical thinking, reading, and information literacy skills*) was an area faculty felt students did not understand. Another area of weakness were students' reflections (SLO B). When given, the reflections were adequate; however many papers were missing this piece.

### Recommendations

Faculty raters who taught ENGL 2\*\* courses identified the following recommendations to improve student learning in the courses:

- Faculty should not assume students know how to find good sources and understand writing for different audiences. Time should be devoted to refreshing students' skills in these areas.
- The reflection prompt should be refined to elicit metacognition and critical thought
- The guidelines for ENGL 211 should be clarified to faculty teaching these courses.

### **Plan to Improve Learning**

- Consider reviewing assignment to align with and/or emphasize outcomes

### **Faculty Senate Recommendations**

- Faculty Senate Committee A reviewed the General Education Assessment results for Written Communication skills in 200-level courses during 2017-2018. Committee A accepted the report and provided no recommendations.