

Seaver College General Education (GE) Assessment – Written Communication Academic Year 2011-2012

You will find the [Office of Institutional Effectiveness web site](#) and the [Program Review Guidebook](#) to be valuable resources when assessing the General Education program.

I. Program Learning Outcome

Students communicate effectively in written form.

II. Institutional Educational Outcomes (IEOs)

The GE Program Learning Outcome aligns with the following IEOs.

Knowledge & Scholarship

Leadership

Think critically and creatively, communicate clearly and act with integrity.

III. Student Learning Outcome(s)

Indicate the student learning outcome (SLO) or outcomes for this component of the General Education program. See the OIE [website](#) for instructions on how to develop quality SLOs.

SLO #1	Students will write in an engaging, effectively organized style that enhances reader's understanding of the topic.
SLO #2	Students will effectively address an audience, providing substantial supporting evidence, insightful analysis, synthesis, and critique of the subject.
SLO #3	Students will use appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas, consistently employing a standard documentation style.
SLO #4	Students will demonstrate a sophisticated use of grammatical conventions with writing that is virtually free from the kinds of errors that distract from meaning and readability.

IV. Curriculum Map

For each SLO, indicate the course(s) where the outcome is **I**ntroduced (I), where students will **D**evelop their skills, knowledge, abilities, etc. related to the SLO (D), and where students will demonstrate **M**astery of the SLO (M) by entering I, D or M in the appropriate cell(s) of the following table. You may add or delete columns or rows as required. An exemplar curriculum map is found [here](#).

	SLO #1	SLO #2	SLO #3	SLO #4
ENG 101/Great Books/SAAJ	I, D	I, D	I	I, D
Junior Writing Portfolio (JWP)	M	D, M	D, M	M

V. Assessment Plan

Complete the following table to indicate how you will gather both direct and indirect evidence to assess student achievement for each SLO. For each assessment, be certain to fully detail the methodology that will be used to conduct the assessment.

	Direct Evidence	Indirect Evidence
SLO #1	Essays from the JWP; committee members will look for evidence of effective organization and engaging style	GE senior survey
SLO #2	Essays from JWP; committee members will look for evidence of audiences awareness, effective use of evidence, insightful analysis, synthesis of ideas, and critique	GE senior survey
SLO #3	Essays from JWP; committee members will look for evidence that students are drawing from appropriate sources to support ideas and consistently employ a standard documentation style	GE senior survey
SLO #4	Essays from the JWP; committee members will look for evidence that students have a command of standard grammatical conventions and are producing essays virtually free from errors that distract from meaning and readability	GE senior survey

Provide a copy of each assessment tool (or a detailed explanation) in Appendix A.

VI. Rubrics

For the assessments identified in the Section V., provide the rubrics that will be used to evaluate the obtained evidence (data). Place the rubrics in Appendix B. Additional information on rubrics is found [here](#).

Rubric attached in Appendix B

VII. Criteria/Benchmarks for Student Achievement / Success

For each assessment SLO, list the criteria or benchmarks established as an acceptable standard of student achievement. Enter this information in the blank cells of the following table.

	Criterion (Criteria)
SLO #1	In the absence of an external benchmark, the assessment committee—composed of experts in the fields of composition studies and rhetoric—determined that at least 70% of student writing should be at a 3 or higher for each SLO. We agreed upon 70% as a benchmark because it indicates that a large majority of students are meeting or surpassing the “sufficient to more-than-sufficient” level.

SLO #2	70% of student writing should be at a 3 or higher
SLO #3	70% of student writing should be at a 3 or higher
SLO #4	70% of student writing should be at a 3 or higher

VIII. Evidence / Data

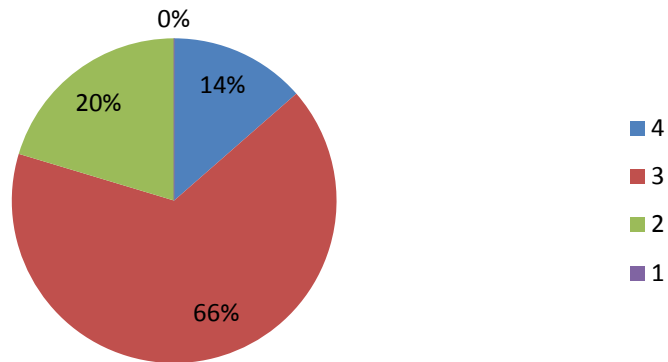
For each SLO, present in summary form the evidence/data gathered to assess the SLO. If necessary, use Appendix C to report raw or original data necessary to support your findings.

For each SLO, the committee evaluated a sample of 59 Junior Writing Portfolios (each portfolio consisted of a reflective cover letter and four essays). The table and charts below summarize the committee's findings for each SLO.

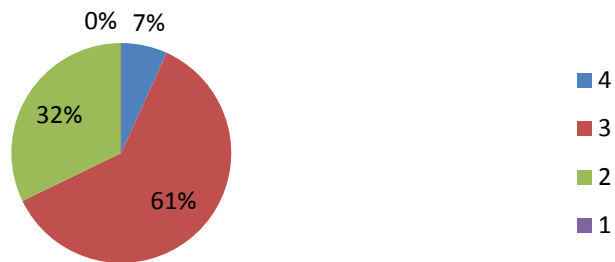
SLO 1-4 Data

	4	3	2	1	
SLO#1 Students will write in an engaging, effectively organized style that enhances reader's understanding of the topic.	8	39	12	0	59
SLO#2 Students will effectively address an audience, providing substantial supporting evidence, insightful analysis, synthesis, and critique of the subject.	4	36	19	0	59
SLO#3 Students will use appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas, consistently employing a standard documentation style.	7	35	16	1	59
SLO#4 Students will demonstrate a sophisticated use of grammatical conventions with writing that is virtually free from the kinds of errors that distract from meaning and readability.	8	33	18	0	59

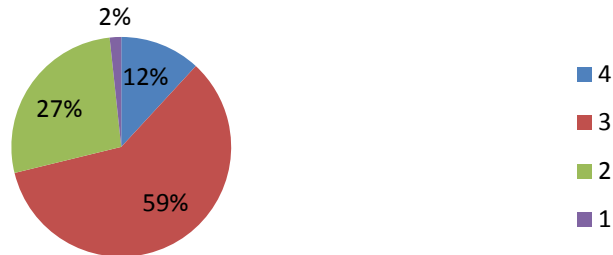
SLO#1 Students will write in an engaging, effectively organized style that enhances reader's understanding of the topic.



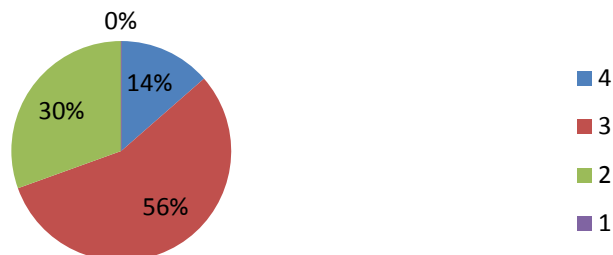
SLO#2 Students will effectively address an audience, providing substantial supporting evidence, insightful analysis, synthesis, and...



SLO#3 Students will use appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas, consistently employing a standard...



SLO#4 Students will demonstrate a sophisticated use of grammatical conventions with writing that is virtually free from the kinds of...



IX. Summary

Based on the evidence and findings reported in the previous section, summarize the findings in narrative form. In the summary, be certain to address the following questions. Also, be certain to reference the appropriate evidence / data supporting each finding / conclusion.

1. Are the SLOs being met at the appropriate level of achievement based upon the criteria / benchmarks defined? Stated differently, are students learning at an appropriate level for this component of the GE program?
2. Is the GE requirement as described in the catalog appropriate or does it need to be revised?

1) Using a rubric of 1-4, the JWP Committee has set a 70% ratio of 3(Sufficient to More-Than Sufficient) as an internal benchmark for each Student Learning Objective. The Committee members based this determination on their expertise in composition and rhetoric studies with two considerations in mind. *First*, setting a benchmark of 70% of students earning a 3 is appropriate pedagogically for the holistic approach to writing assessment that the JWP Committee members and many writing specialists use. *Second*, reaching this benchmark would place the students slightly above an average level of competence.

A review of the data on SLO #1 suggests that student writing in this sample surpassed the benchmark. 80% of student portfolios scored a 3 or higher for *writing in an engaging, effectively organized style that enhances the readers understanding of the topic*. Of the four SLOs, the competencies described in SLO #1 may transcend the specialized writing conventions linked to each major.

However, student writing in this sample did not meet the stated benchmark for SLO#2. Only 68% scored 3 or higher in terms of *effectively addressing an audience and providing substantial supporting evidence*. The lower scores could be explained by the higher levels of critical thinking and rhetorical sophistication that this SLO requires. Or perhaps the range of writing assignments expected within different majors partly account for the scores. A larger sample size or samples from various majors would be needed to draw more definitive conclusions.

The data further indicates that for SLOs #3 and 4, student writing met the benchmark for achievement, as 71% and 70% (respectively) scored 3 or higher. SLO#3 required students to “use appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas, consistently employing a standard documentation style.” SLO#4 required students to “demonstrate a sophisticated use of grammatical conventions with writing that is virtually free from the kinds of errors that distract from meaning and readability.” These scores may be partly attributable to the respective emphasis each major program places upon precise research and correct language usage.

Indirect evidence from the GE Assessment survey sent to graduating seniors is generally supportive of the JWP Committee’s findings. Because the scales on the two surveys differ, it is not possible to match these data sets perfectly (for example, our 3 contains the “sufficient to more-than-sufficient” range, which may blur the line between “sufficient” and “considerably” on the senior survey); however, no major discrepancies exist between the two data sets. According to the senior survey, 61.2% of respondents noted that the GE curriculum had contributed either “sufficiently” or “considerably” (45.6% and 15.6% respectively) to their ability to write effectively. The reported JWP data indicates that between 56% and 66% of students are earning a score of 3 for SLOs #1-4, which is in keeping with the seniors’ self-reported scores.

2) The GE requirement as described in the catalog is appropriate.

X. Recommendations (Closing the Loop)

What recommendations are necessary to correct weaknesses or improve this area of the General Education program? For each recommendation, reference the supporting evidence and briefly describe the expected outcome. All recommendations should be resource neutral.

Additionally, if you propose revision of the catalog content on pages 77-87 of the 2012-2013 Seaver College catalog (<http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academics/content/2012seavercatalog.pdf>) indicate the proposed revised content as an action item.

You may propose as few as one or as many as four (or more) action items. However, acting on fewer changes is likely more realistic than acting on numerous changes at one time. For this reason, prioritize all action items in order of importance and limit action items to those supported by compelling evidence.

1) In order to make sure that the Written Communication component of the GE program is being integrated successfully, we need to take a closer look at the Writing Intensive courses in the major. Some students submit their JWP without having written a paper for a course in their major, which leaves us unable to determine how successfully a student has learned appropriate disciplinary research skills, documentation style, audience awareness, and so forth. It is possible that more focused oversight of these courses within programs/divisions, as well as within International Programs, is needed to ensure that students are learning the expectations for writing in their chosen field of study and that they are being asked to practice writing in that field. The scores for SLO #2 could potentially be improved if students across all majors are regularly asked to synthesize and analyze information in writing. Similarly, increased attention to writing in the major may allow us to exceed the benchmark for SLO #3, because all students would be learning and practicing the research and documentation style appropriate to their discipline.

2) We suggest collecting feedback from faculty across the disciplines who teach writing intensive courses regarding their current practices and their concerns/questions about teaching writing, particularly in relation to the SLOs. If we learned, for example, that most faculty are not sure how to incorporate one of the SLOs into their courses, we would be able to take deliberate steps toward faculty development in that area.

XI. Contributors

Assessment of this area of the General Education program was performed by the following individual(s).

Committee Chairperson	Position Title	Academic Division
Heather Thomson-Bunn	Assistant Professor of English, Director of First-Year Writing	HUTE

Committee Members	Position Title	Academic Division
Theresa Flynn	Writing Center Director, Visiting Assistant Professor of English	HUTE
Lorie Goodman	Associate Professor of English	HUTE
David Holmes	Professor of English	HUTE

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Assessment Details

The following assessment was used to assess Student Learning Outcome #1, 2, 3, and 4.

For SLOs 1, 2, 3, and 4, committee members looked at a sample of 59 JWPs collected from undergraduates at Seaver College during the Spring 2012 semester. Using a rubric aligned with the SLOs, committee members evaluated JWPs to determine whether Seaver undergraduates demonstrate acceptable achievement for each SLO.

Data will be archived using Sakai (Courses), with the site accessible to all faculty involved in assessment. Archiving data online will provide easy access to current and future assessment committee members, and will establish a chronology of assessment activity. Along with a description of relevant findings, an account of assessment procedures and all rubrics developed will be posted, allowing others to replicate assessment activities in the future.

Appendix B - Rubrics

The following rubric was used to analyze the evidence gathered in assessment of Student Learning Outcome(s) #1-4.

{Repeat and edit the above text as necessary for each rubric.}

	4 (Outstanding)	3 (Sufficient to More-Than-Sufficient)	2 (Minimally Passable)	1 (Unacceptable)
SLO #1 Students will write in an engaging, effectively organized style that enhances reader's understanding of the topic	<p>Writing engages reader & enhances their understanding of the topic</p> <p>Writing clearly demonstrates an effective pattern of organizing that facilitates the reader's understanding</p> <p>Main points are clearly stated and well advanced</p>	<p>Writing enables reader to understand ideas with little or no re-reading</p> <p>Writing follows an appropriate pattern of organization</p> <p>Main points are clearly stated</p>	<p>Writing occasionally requires reader to re-read in order to understand ideas</p> <p>Structural problems occasionally hinder reader's understanding</p> <p>Main points are stated, but not necessarily clearly or effectively</p>	<p>Writing requires reader to re-read frequently in order to understand ideas, or writing is so confusing as to obscure meaning</p> <p>Overall structure lacks coherence</p> <p>Main points are not clearly stated</p>

<p>SLO #2 Students will effectively address an audience, providing substantial supporting evidence, insightful analysis, synthesis, and critique of the subject</p>	<p>Writer provides insightful, well articulated analysis, synthesis, and critique of the subject</p> <p>Sustains a well-focused analysis, connecting ideas in a sophisticated and logical manner</p> <p>Statements substantially supported with compelling evidence</p>	<p>Cogent, clear analysis, synthesis, and critique of the subject</p> <p>Statements sufficiently supported with relevant evidence</p> <p>Connects ideas logically</p>	<p>Analysis of the subject is sometimes superficial and not consistently supported with relevant evidence</p> <p>Ideas are not always connected logically</p>	<p>Superficial and/or poorly articulated analysis of subject</p> <p>Fails to connect ideas logically</p>
<p>SLO #3 Students will use appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas, consistently employing a standard documentation style</p>	<p>Adeptly uses appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas</p> <p>Consistently employs a standard documentation style</p>	<p>Adequately uses appropriate materials from a variety of resources to support ideas</p> <p>Employs a standard documentation style with few errors</p>	<p>Use of resources is limited and/or inappropriate for writer's purpose</p> <p>Documentation style is employed inconsistently or with frequent errors</p>	<p>Fails to include and synthesize appropriate resources</p> <p>Makes significant errors in documentation style</p>
<p>SLO #4 Students will demonstrate a sophisticated use of grammatical conventions with writing that is virtually free from the kinds of errors that distract from meaning and readability</p>	<p>Sophisticated use of grammatical conventions</p> <p>Writing is virtually free from the kinds of errors that distract from meaning and readability</p> <p>Vocabulary & sentence</p>	<p>Grammatical structures are generally appropriate, though not necessarily perfect</p> <p>Occasional errors may distract from readability</p> <p>Vocabulary &</p>	<p>Grammatical errors occasionally distract the reader</p> <p>Vocabulary & sentence structure are simple</p>	<p>Grammatical errors are so obtrusive that readers are seriously distracted by them</p> <p>Simplistic word choice & sentence structure limits description and/or expression</p>

	structure are sophisticated and appropriate for the topic, discipline, and intended audience	sentence structure are adequate, but may lack sophistication		
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Appendix C - Evidence /Data

The following evidence was gathered in assessment of Student Learning Outcome # ____.
{Repeat and edit the above text as necessary for each SLO.}

Appendix D - Chronology

The committee met and performed activities in support of this assessment as indicated below. Please add additional rows as necessary.

Date	Members Participating (Initials)	Action
9/22	HTB	Drafted SLOs; set up team meeting to discuss template
9/28	HTB, TF, DH	Meeting to discuss template and revise SLOs
10/4-10/17	HTB, TF, LG, DH	Sections I-V of template revised and completed (via email exchanges); template submitted to Dean Feltner for review
11/16	HTB	Meeting with Dean Feltner to discuss comments on template and plans for proceeding with template. Revisions made to template in response to comments.
11/29	HTB	Reviewed sample rubrics; compiled list of next steps to discuss at team meeting
11/30	HTB, TF, LG, DH	Meeting to work on rubrics and full assessment plan.
12/7	HTB	Revision of template in response to committee meeting; meeting with Dean Feltner to discuss description of JWP assessment
12/8	TF, LG	Meeting to develop rubrics for assessment
12/9	HTB	Drafted Assessment Plan; updated template submitted to Dean Feltner for review
3/14	HTB, LG, DH	Meeting to develop plan for data collection
3/30	LG	Revised SLOs for use in rubric
4/2	HTB	Drafted data analysis rubric; prepared for team meeting
4/3	HTB, LG	Meeting to finalize rubric for data analysis

4/29- 5/3	HTB, DH, LG, TF	Evaluated sample JWPs using rubric
4/30	HTB, LG, DH	Met to discuss provisional findings and devise plan for summarizing findings
5/7	LG	Synthesized rubrics and created graphs representing findings for each SLO
5/8	HTB, LG, DH, TF	Met to review synthesized data and map out narrative summary
5/10	HTB	Analyzed indirect evidence and compared it to committee's findings; drafted action items
5/16	DH	Drafted narrative summary
5/17	HTB, LG, DH	Finalized and proofread report