

Hunter College English Composition Assessment 2022-2023

Summary Report, September 2023

By Joel Bloom, Ph.D., Director of Assessment

Introduction. The Hunter College Faculty Senate first passed its institutional General Education Assessment Plan in April 2018, and then updated it for another five-year cycle in May 2022. The Hunter Senate’s Joint Committee on General Education Assessment (comprised of members of the Committee of General Education Requirements and the Committee on Academic Assessment & Evaluation), in cooperation with the Assessment Office and the Provost’s Office, planned and implemented student learning outcome assessments in the English Composition required common core category.

Methodology. Because student learning outcomes (SLOs) in English Composition were assessed successfully in 2018-2019, we were able to use a similar rubric for the seven SLOs as in the previous cycle, as well as a similar methodology, with the main difference being the inclusion of English 220 in addition to 120, making this year’s assessment broader.

The two required composition courses are English 120: Expository Writing and English 220: Writing about Literature. Students take these courses in their first year. English 120 offers about 110 sections each fall and 40 every spring, and English 220 offers about 30 sections each fall and 100 each spring. Both courses have a similar process for assessment: the department assessment coordinator and course coordinators meet to determine the outcomes that will be assessed for a given year. They collect two papers from each section of the courses, determined by random sample, with English 120 assessed in fall and English 220 in the spring. Using a common rubric aligned with the course learning outcomes that are both provided to students with the syllabus, a group of faculty who teach the course meet to evaluate the sample according to the rubric after a norming session facilitated by the Assessment Coordinator, course coordinator, and the Office of Assessment. Results are compiled by the Office of Assessment. The course coordinators determine how those results are used after presenting them to the teaching faculty at professional development meetings. They make improvements in the course and then include assessment of those improvements in the following year’s plan.

Working with the Joint Committee and the Director of Assessment, the English Department’s Assessment Coordinator followed the procedures discussed above for Fall 2022 sections of English 120 and for Spring 2023 sections of English 220 at the end of Spring 2023. For the assessment in ENGL 120, a total of 199 pieces of student work were assessed—note: one paper was misplaced, that is why we do not have 200 pieces of work; an additional 160 pieces of student work were assessed from ENGL 220, for a total sample size of 359 student artifacts.

Table 1a. Assessment Results in English Composition Assessment in ENGL 120

English Composition General Education Outcomes	Failure	Weak	Competent	Good	Excellent	Top 3 Categories	Total Assessed
1. Focus and Thesis	2.5%	21.6%	31.2%	31.7%	13.1%	75.9%	199
2. Argumentation and Evidence	2.5%	26.1%	34.2%	25.6%	11.6%	71.4%	199
3. Organization and Coherency	0.5%	13.6%	34.2%	34.7%	17.1%	85.9%	199
4a. Engagement with Sources	1.5%	25.1%	36.7%	23.6%	13.1%	73.4%	199
4b. Choice of Sources	3.5%	14.6%	30.7%	33.2%	18.1%	81.9%	199
4c. Integration and Attribution of Sources	3.0%	30.7%	27.6%	27.6%	11.1%	66.3%	199
5. Style and Grammar	0.5%	5.5%	21.1%	32.2%	40.7%	94.0%	199

Average:

Table 1b. Assessment Results in English Composition Assessment in ENGL 220^[SC1]

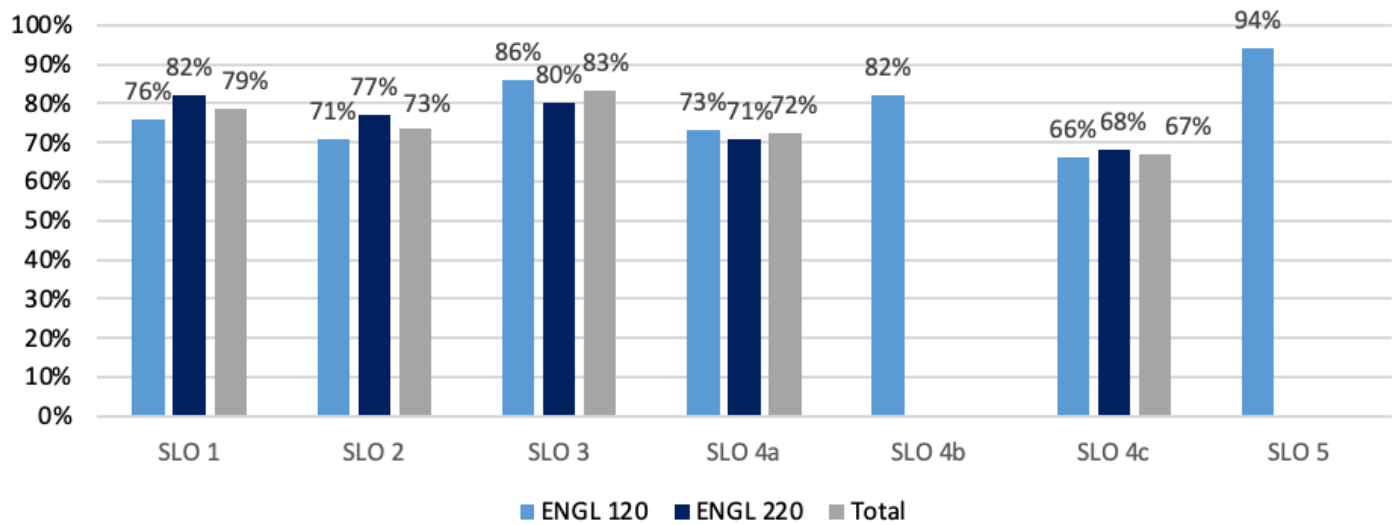
English Composition General Education Outcomes	Failure	Weak	Competent	Good	Excellent	Top 3 Categories	Total Assessed
1. Focus and Thesis	1.9%	16.3%	26.3%	28.1%	17.5%	81.9%	160
2. Argumentation and Evidence	6.3%	16.9%	37.5%	33.1%	8.1%	76.9%	160
3. Organization and Coherency	1.9%	18.1%	40.0%	33.1%	6.9%	80.0%	160
4a. Engagement with Sources	4.4%	24.4%	34.4%	31.3%	5.6%	71.3%	160
4b. Choice of Sources							na
4c. Integration and Attribution of Sources	5.6%	26.3%	33.8%	30.0%	4.4%	68.1%	160
5. Style and Grammar							na

Table 1c. Assessment Results in English Composition Assessment in ENGL 120 and 220 Combined

English Composition General Education Outcomes	Failure	Weak	Competent	Good	Excellent	Top 3 Categories	Total Assessed
1. Focus and Thesis	2.2%	19.2%	29.0%	34.5%	15.0%	78.6%	359
2. Argumentation and Evidence	4.2%	22.0%	35.7%	28.1%	10.0%	73.8%	359
3. Organization and Coherency	1.1%	15.6%	36.8%	34.0%	12.5%	83.3%	359
4a. Engagement with Sources	2.8%	24.8%	35.7%	27.0%	9.7%	72.4%	359
4b. Choice of Sources	3.5%	14.6%	30.7%	33.2%	18.1%	81.9%	199
4c. Integration and Attribution of Sources	4.2%	28.7%	30.4%	28.7%	8.1%	67.1%	359
5. Style and Grammar	0.5%	5.5%	21.1%	32.2%	40.7%	94.0%	199

Summary of Results. As shown in Table 1, above, and in Figure 1 below, for all learning outcomes for English Composition, large majorities of students were found to have achieved competence or higher in both classes, although there is substantial variation among outcomes. Of the seven outcomes assessed in ENGL 120, three showed over 80% achieving competence or better; three others between 70%-79%, and the lowest (outcome 4c, or “Integration and Attribution of Sources) was 66%. For the five outcomes assessed for ENGL 220, results were similar – slightly higher for SLO1, SLO2 and SLO 4c, and slightly lower for SLOs 3 and 4a.

Figure 1. Percent Achieving Competency or Higher by Learning Outcome, English Composition (ENGL 120 and ENGL 220)



Assessment Process

For both classes, students were assigned to write 10-page papers. At the end of the semesters, two papers were randomly selected from each section, for a total of 199 papers for ENGL 120 (one paper was misplaced in the process) and 160 papers for ENGL 220, for a total sample of 359 student artifacts assessed. A combination of instructors and librarians were selected to conduct the assessment, with each paper to be reviewed by one instructor and one librarian. Prior to conducting their assessment, all members of the assessment team met for norming sections in which they viewed a few examples of student papers together with the rubric in order to reach a general understanding of what each of the five levels of competency means for each of the student learning outcomes. Instructors and librarians then submitted their results to the English Composition Program Directors and Assessment Coordinator for compilation and analysis. They in turn submitted a comprehensive report to the Assessment Director, who in turn drafted this summary report for the Senate Committees on Academic Assessment and Evaluation, and General Education Requirements.

Conclusion

The Program Directors also provided a combined summary of their findings:

Across both courses we note the areas that need the most improvement are the sustained making and supporting an argument and the mechanics of incorporating sources. [LK2] With students needing more help with the higher-order issues of writing such as developing a topic, researching and engaging with sources, teachers may not spend as much time on the mechanical issues, but our numbers and discussion with readers also show that these lower-order/mechanical issues (of citing a source for example) also affect the higher order issues.

The appendices show comparative assessment results from previous years and between both courses. [LK3] [SC4] Slight changes in the rubric have occurred over time, such as breaking out the information literacy outcome into three rubric categories and percentages vs numbers, but the results show that despite the many setbacks from the pandemic, our general education composition outcomes are being met thanks to the dedication of our faculty who have been doing more with less. Students are needing extra support with the transition to college and to college writing. These courses are where such support can be given or interventions be made.

Action Items:

The report recommended a number of actions to be taken with regard to both courses to improve instruction and student learning, to be implemented in summer and fall of 2023. Program Directors and the Dean's Office were given the responsibility of seeing to it that these actions are carried out:

- Making sure all sections assign the pre/post semester responses and a 10-page research paper
- Providing sample syllabus that emphasizes the above requirements and scaffolded process
- Keeping course caps low to give more attention to students and their writing. The National Council of Teachers of Writing recommends composition courses are capped at 18. We currently have 23 in 120 and 25 in 220.
- Funding more sections of ESL
- Providing professional development focused on setting students up for success (overcoming learning loss), scaffolding the writing process, and understanding and valuing cultural differences in argumentation.

Improvements made since 2019

Librarians have been part of professional development workshops and assessment processes within the English Department. With the return of professional development meetings in fall 2023, the English department will once again invite librarians to be part of that community. Writing fellows did in-person and virtual workshops fall 2022 and spring 2023. The English Department has also added more complicated academic readings and will continue to do so, spending more time on understanding arguments and genres. Faculty development meetings and the development of curriculum materials have also been helpful. The English department also continues to offer specific workshops, classes, and post 120 extension courses for English Language Learners and those who do not pass English 120.

Summary and Conclusions of the Assessment Director

The assessments carried out in 2022-2023 by the English Composition Program were thorough and carefully designed. The Program Directors and Assessment Coordinator clearly spent a great deal of time and effort on both the assessment itself, and on the analysis and conclusions. They also have reflected on how they can use the assessment results as a program to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning. With regards to the results, the Program does report a small decline in student learning, which could potentially be attributed to COVID learning loss, increase in section size, increase in numbers of ESL students, and loss of resources for professional development.

Recommendations of the Assessment Director

We encourage administration at Hunter College to take a careful look at the Program's requests, and consider them on their merits in the context of Hunter College resources.

We recommend that the Rockowitz Writing Center be provided with a permanent Director, whether by promoting the Interim Director or conducting a search.