

General Studies Assessment Report

2016-2017

Prepared by Benjamin Worth, Vice President of Academic Affairs

OVERVIEW

Given the similarities in the transfer program curricula, one assessment report is compiled for all programs and is called the General Studies Assessment Report. This assessment covers the following Associate of Arts and Sciences Degrees:

- Business Administration
- Business Administration with a Specialization in Business Foundations
- Education
- General Studies
- Science

Because of the large number of learning outcomes expected of degree graduates, the General Studies program assesses learning outcomes on a cyclical basis, so that only some outcomes are assessed each year, but all outcomes are assessed at least every six years. The assessments for program learning outcomes in any given year are conducted in the spring and thus results in a given year are not available until the summer after the assessments have been conducted. Each assessment report for General Studies contains results of assessments conducted in the academic year prior to when the report is written.

ASSESSMENT

In the Fall of 2015, the DSLCC office of Institutional Effectiveness began an assessment of the general education competency of written communication. For the period of 2015-2017, DSLCC used the following definition of the Communication General Education competency:

Communication: A competent communicator can interact with others using all forms of communication, resulting in understanding and being understood. Degree graduates will demonstrate the ability to:

1. understand and interpret complex materials;
2. assimilate, organize, develop, and present an idea formally and informally;
3. use standard English;
4. use appropriate verbal and non-verbal responses in interpersonal relations and group discussions; use listening skills;
5. recognize the role of culture in communication.

Written communication competencies are addressed in student learning outcomes 1 – 3, and the Office of IE/IR chose to focus on those competencies. For an assessment tool, IE/IR elected to use the McCann Testing Virginia Placement Test (VPT). This assessment is also given to incoming students whose college board exams (typically SAT or ACT) indicate the student may not be ready for college-level work. The VPT is used to place students into developmental coursework. McCann Testing describes the assessment:

The CollegeSuccess Standard Placement Test is recognized nationwide as a reliable and effective college placement exam for Reading, Writing, & Math. CollegeSuccess provides computer-adaptive placement tests (CAT) designed to assess the knowledge and skills of incoming college students and is a low-cost alternative to standard college placement tests like Accuplacer. With the data collected through all CollegeSuccess placement tests, administrators can properly place students in courses suited to their skill sets or track their “readiness” for college-level coursework. Upon completion of placement tests, CollegeSuccess delivers immediate online test results, allowing for rapid, informed placement decisions for your incoming students. CollegeSuccess also provides diagnostic assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math that are designed to identify student’s individual strengths and weaknesses. Access to this information provides college and university administrators with the means to make accurate placement and remediation decisions that lead to higher student success, improved retention, and higher graduation rates. Vantage/McCann believes that only through proper placement and diagnostic testing, can students can be placed into environments where their skills can be nurtured and mastered. The test was administered in the

The Assessment was administered to all graduating degree-seeking students during last 6 weeks of the Spring 2016 semester. 87 students completed the assessment; this number represented 87% of the approximately 100 degree-seeking graduates.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The results of the assessment were provided in a report, the *General Education Assessment Written Communication 2015-2016 Results Report*, which was developed by the Office Institutional Effectiveness. The full report is provided in the Appendix. The report shows that just under half (17/35) AA&S students scored a five or better, and just over 80% (29/35) scored at least a four. For AAS students, 40% scored above a four (21/52) and 77% (40/52) scored at least a four. Transfer students as a whole scored about 1/3 standard deviation higher than OT students, which might be due to an increased emphasis on essay writing in many of the Transfer majors.

USE OF DATA

The Vice President of Academic Affairs shared the General Education Assessment Written Communication 2015-2016 Results Report with program faculty and Program Heads at the start of the Fall 2016 semester, discussed the implications of the findings as requested that program heads review the data as part of their assessment strategies.

In consultation with program faculty, the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Program Heads incorporated a variety of changes in to their programs.

English

The English department had concerns about student ability to conduct documentation and consequently implemented a portfolio review process that emphasized a set of common portfolio assignments that emphasized documentation.

Biology

Biology faculty reviewed writing procedures employed in lab write-ups and encouraged students to use the DSLCC Writing Center, which had been developed as the college QEP.

APPENDIX

General Education Assessment Written Communication 2015-2016 Results Report

General Education Assessment
Written Communication
2015-2016 Results Report*
Prepared by Chris Orem, Director of IE
July 19, 2016

During the 2015-2016 academic year, DSLCC assessed students on the general education competency of written communication. Using the McCann Testing Virginia Placement Test, graduating degree-seeking students were asked to respond to a prompt about the person they most admire. The assessments were administered online in either the Scott Hall testing center or at the RRC.

Data Collection

In the spring semester, in the six weeks following spring break through commencement, 87 students completed the assessment. This number represented 87% of the approximately 100 degree-seeking graduates. Students were asked to complete the prompt on a computer and to take as much time as they needed. There was no penalty for the quality of writing, though proctors were asked to encourage students to try on the assessments.

Proficiency Standards

The VPT is generally used for placement testing when a student applies to the College. Thus, scores are used to recommend a placement into either developmental English or college-level English. Scores correspond to the following general levels of student writing.

| Score | Placement Recommendation/Skill Level |
|-------|---|
| 0 | Unscorable |
| 1 | ENF 1 |
| 2 | ENF 2 |
| 3 | ENF 3 |
| 4 | ENG 111 – College Ready |
| 5 | On par with having one College composition course* |
| 6 | On par with having two College composition courses* |

*I believe these are accurate. May want to confirm with VCCS

In essence, students who score a 3 or above are considered College-ready. It has not been determined by faculty, at DSLCC or throughout the VCCS, where an expected graduate should score, though one would expect most students to score at least a five.

Results

Below is a table summarizing the overall scores for AA&S (Transfer) and AAS (OT) students. Frequencies of each overall score are provided, including the averages, standard deviations, and standard errors (how far we would expect any sample mean to differ from the true mean of the population).

As the table shows, just under half (17/35) AA&S students scored a five or better, and just over 80% (29/35) scored at least a four. For AAS students, 40% scored above a four (21/52) and 77% (40/52) scored at least a four. Transfer students as a whole scored about 1/3 standard deviation higher than OT students, which might be due to an increased emphasis on essay writing in many of the Transfer majors.

| Score | AA&S | AAS | All |
|---------|------|------|------|
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| 4 | 12 | 19 | 31 |
| 5 | 9 | 16 | 25 |
| 6 | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Total | 35 | 52 | 87 |
| Average | 4.49 | 4.13 | 4.28 |
| SD | 1.15 | 1.22 | 1.20 |
| SE | 0.19 | 0.17 | 0.13 |

As mentioned in the footnote, this report does not provide much more than a general overview of student writing scores on the VPT. A more detailed report should be delivered to the VCCS, and subsequently to the colleges in the coming months. For information about these data, please contact:

Cat Finnegan (Asst Vice Chancellor, Institutional Effectiveness at the VCCS) cfinnegan@vccs.edu

Jolene Hamm (Director of IE at PVCC, but coordinated assessment process for the 2015-16 year for the VCCS) jhamm@pvcc.edu