

Department of English Course-level Outcome Assessment Fall 2019 Pilot Project

Introduction

Rio Hondo College's Department of English (English) conducted a course-level outcome assessment pilot project using data from English 101 taught during the fall 2019 semester. A team of ten faculty independently reviewed student essays and rated them Proficient, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory on the four English 101 course-level outcomes, Figure 1.

Figure 1. English 101 Outcomes

1. The student will formulate a clear thesis statement.
2. The student will analyze and incorporate source material smoothly and accurately.
3. The student will document the sources correctly in MLA format.
4. The student will employ standard conventions of grammar and mechanics.

The data was provided to the Institutional Research & Planning Office (IRP) for analysis and results were prepared and presented at the February 2020 department meeting.

Methods

The English faculty coordinator requested a **representative sample** of fall 2019 English 101 sections from which to get 200 essays for assessment.

From the 93 sections offered during fall 2019, IRP identified **six random samples** of 10 sections that could be used. Each of the six samples was **analyzed to determine if it represented all English 101 offerings** on two primary factors, support (i.e. English 101, English 101S, and English 101SP) and format (i.e. in-person or online).

The sample that most closely represented the offerings for fall 2019, based on support and format, was selected. Secondary factors (i.e. days of the week, times, location, and faculty contract) were also considered.

Instructors of the ten selected sections were notified and final student essays were collected for evaluation. Identifying information from the essays was redacted and a packet of essays from multiple sections was given to **ten volunteer evaluators** with instructions (see Appendix A). Each evaluator rated 15 or 16 essays for a total of **158 essays**.

Volunteers rated each paper on four outcomes using a three-point scale of Proficient, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory. Ratings and qualitative comments were given to IRP for analysis.

Results

Results from the pilot project are presented below. Figure 2 and 3 present the distribution of ratings by course-level outcome. Ratings of Proficient and Satisfactory combined are presented in Figure 4. Comments and feedback, about the data, and the evaluation process, are included in Figure 5. Totals disaggregated by evaluator can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 2. Evaluation Results Table

	Proficient		Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Outcome 1. Thesis Statement	46.2	73	32.9	52	20.9	33
Outcome 2. Source Material	34.8	55	38.6	61	26.6	42
Outcome 3. MLA Format	30.8	49	37.1	59	32.1	51
Outcome 4. Grammar and Mechanics	43.3	68	39.5	62	17.2	27

Figure 3. Evaluation Results Graph

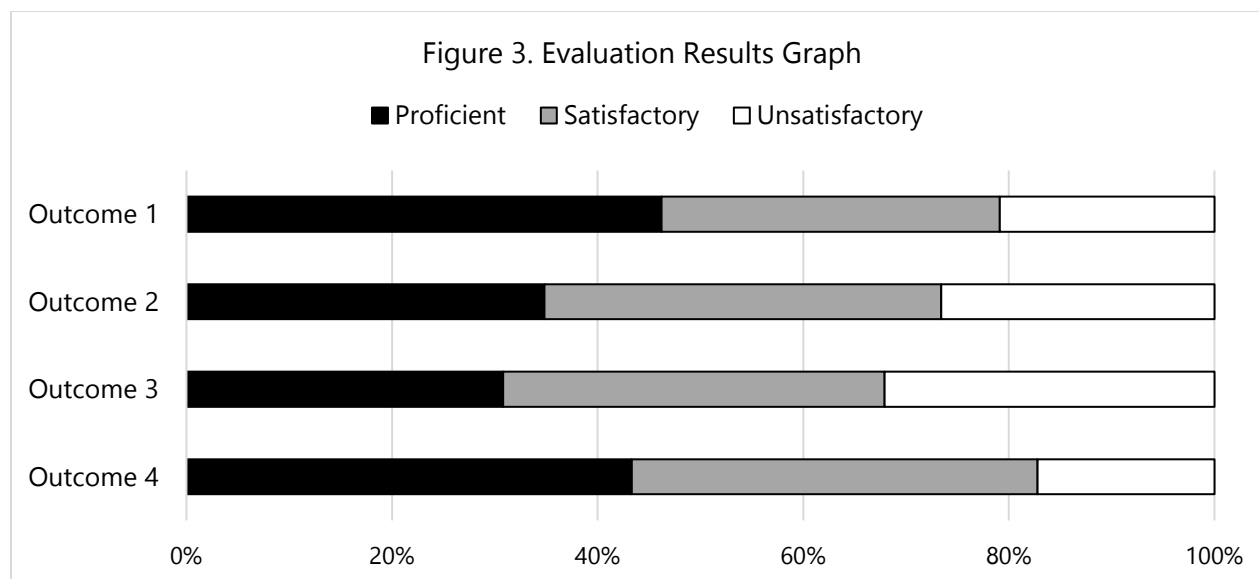


Figure 4. Evaluation Results Table – Proficient and Satisfactory Combined

	Proficient or Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	%	n	%	n
Outcome 1. Thesis Statement	79.1	125	20.9	33
Outcome 2. Source Material	73.4	116	26.6	42
Outcome 3. MLA Format	67.9	108	32.1	51
Outcome 4. Grammar and Mechanics	82.8	130	17.2	27

Figure 5. Evaluator Comments and Feedback

Outcome 1. Thesis

- Some papers clarify topic... not always a treatment, though, to understand the stance/thesis.
- Students do seem to understand how to formulate thesis statements.

Outcome 2. Source Material*

- While most students proficiently incorporated source material, many would incorporate the material one way in their individual papers and would continue to follow that same method of incorporation for each source. This may simply be a style issue, but some students may perceive utilizing outside sources as another "box to check" rather than best understanding how to use them and what is the purpose.
- Sometimes students included material... not always with analysis though.

Outcome 3. MLA Format*

- Far too many author names and article titles find their way into the text.
- Proficiency in MLA documentation, both parenthetical and in works cited page, is seriously lacking.

Outcome 4. Grammar and Mechanics

- Common grammatical errors: you, they/it with no antecedent, contractions, comma splices. Even in the stronger papers, sentences do not read well. Students need to read their work aloud.
- Some errors but not interfering with meaning.

Other Comments

- Length of the research paper (and amount of research required) needs to be standardized.
- If inconsistent, it could still be satisfactory since some correctly done.
- Smooth process. This took an hour and a half. It was nice being neutral and not knowing who wrote the essays. I think this creates a more accurate analysis.
- How about a new SLO regarding paragraphing? Structure/organization?

*Comments for these two outcomes may overlap.

Summary

The pilot project produced the following results:

- 79.1% of students formulated a clear thesis statement.
- 73.4% of students analyzed and incorporated source material smoothly and accurately.
- 67.9% of students documented sources correctly in MLA format.
- 82.8% of students employed standard conventions of grammar and mechanics.

This data can be used by the Department of English to focus a conversation about course-level outcomes and student learning.

Questions to Consider

- Are the **course-level outcomes** understood by evaluators in the same way?
- Do the **course-level outcomes** accurately and meaningfully reflect student learning?
- Does the **three-point scale** (i.e. Proficient, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory) work well for assessing course-level outcomes?
- Is there **variation across evaluators**? What can this variation be attributed to? How does it impact outcomes assessment?
- What is the department's **benchmark for proficiency** on course outcomes?
- What **themes of success** emerge from the assessment data? How can this be built on?
- Are there outcomes that should be **targeted for improvement**?
- What **resources** are needed to ensure improvements come to fruition?
- When it comes time in the **curriculum process for course revision**, what (if any) changes need to be made to this course?
- Did this process produce **meaningful data** for the Department of English? How can it be improved in the future?

Appendix A. Instructions

Outcomes	Proficient	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
The student will formulate a clear thesis statement			
The student will analyze and incorporate source material smoothly and accurately			
The student will document the sources correctly in MLA format			
The student will employ standard conventions of grammar and mechanics			

Directions for English 101 Pilot Outcomes Study for Fall 2019

1. You have received a packet of English 101 essays. All identifying information has been redacted. The essays from the sample have been thoroughly mixed up, so the packet you have represents papers from several different instructors. The names of the students and the instructors participating in the study will never be revealed, and this applies to the reader evaluators as well.
2. Evaluate each essay for all four outcomes. You can mark the boxes as appropriate with a check mark or a single line. Each essay should receive four marks. You need not read the entire essay to determine the level of proficiency for each outcome.
3. Please feel free to make qualitative comments on this paper and return it with you tally to Janice Garcia in A-219. Please take your time to review the essays, but please return all materials within about two -to – three weeks. When she has received all the packets, we will tally the results and list all qualitative comments. We will discuss the results at our February department meeting.

Qualitative comments: Please write any comments below. All comments will be forwarded to the department for consideration.

Appendix B. Data

Evaluator	No. of Essays	Outcome 1. Thesis Statement (n=158)			Outcome 2. Source Material (n=158)			Outcome 3. MLA Format (n=159)			Outcome 4. Grammar and Mechanics (n=157)		
		PROF	SAT	UNSAT	PROF	SAT	UNSAT	PROF	SAT	UNSAT	PROF	SAT	UNSAT
1	16	6	7	3	6	3	7	3	6	7	6	3	7
2	16	5	5	6	4	8	4	3	6	7	5	11	0
3	16	5	7	4	4	7	5	0	11	5	4	9	3
4	16	6	6	4	4	7	5	3	4	9	5	7	4
5	15	11	1	3	6	8	1	6	7	2	6	6	3
6	15	7	7	1	9	4	2	9	4	2	8	4	3
7	16	9	6	1	5	10	1	6	8	2	7	9	0
8	16	7	4	5	2	4	10	4	9	4	12	3	0
9	16	2	8	6	0	9	7	0	4	12	0	9	7
10	16	15	1	0	15	1	0	15	0	1	15	1	0
SUM	158	73	52	33	55	61	42	49	59	51	68	62	27
Rating Percentage Proficient/Satisfactory		46.2%	32.9%	20.9%	34.8%	38.6%	26.6%	30.8%	37.1%	32.1%	43.3%	39.5%	17.2%
			79.1%			73.4%			67.9%			82.8%	

Department of English

English 201 Course-level Outcome Assessment

Spring 2020 Pilot Project

Introduction

Rio Hondo College's Department of English (English) conducted a course-level outcome assessment pilot project using data from English 201 taught during the spring 2020 semester. A team of seven faculty independently reviewed student essays and rated them Proficient or Not Proficient on the six English 201 course-level outcomes, Figure 1.

Figure 1. English 201 Outcomes

1. Students will write a clear, declarative thesis statement.
2. Students will integrate credible outside sources into their papers.
3. Students will organize their ideas logically.
4. Students will write persuasively.
5. Student papers will contain few or no errors in mechanics and grammar.
6. Students correctly documented outside sources using the designated citation format.

The data were provided to the Institutional Research & Planning Office (IRP) for analysis and results were prepared and presented at the September 2020 department meeting.

Methods

The English faculty coordinator requested a **representative sample** of spring 2020 English 201 sections from which to get 150 essays for assessment.

From the 41 sections offered during spring 2020, IRP identified **five random samples** of seven sections that could be used. Each of the five samples was **analyzed to determine if it represented all English 201 offerings** on three factors, instructor employment type (full-time or part-time), format and location (in-person on main campus, in-person at Educational Center, or online), and time of class (day or evening). The sample that most closely represented the entire spring 2020 English 201 offerings was selected for inclusion in the pilot project.

Instructors of the seven selected sections were notified and final student essays were collected for evaluation. Identifying information from the essays was redacted and a packet of essays from multiple sections was given to **seven volunteer evaluators** with instructions (see Appendix A). Each evaluator rated 16-18 essays for a total of **119 essays**.

Volunteers rated each paper **Proficient or Not Proficient** on each of the **six course-level outcomes**. Ratings and qualitative comments were given to IRP for analysis.

Results

Results from the pilot project are presented below. Figure 2 and 3 present the distribution of ratings by course-level outcome. Comments and feedback, about the data, and the evaluation process, are included in Figure 4. Totals disaggregated by evaluator can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 2. Evaluation Results Table

	Proficient		Not Proficient	
	%	n	%	n
Outcome 1. Thesis Statement	60.2	71	39.8	47
Outcome 2. Credible Outside Sources	62.2	74	37.8	45
Outcome 3. Logical Organization	68.3	82	31.7	38
Outcome 4. Persuasive Writing	63.9	76	36.1	43
Outcome 5. Mechanics and Grammar	74.2	89	25.8	31
Outcome 6. Citation Format	52.9	63	47.1	56

Figure 3. Evaluation Results Graph

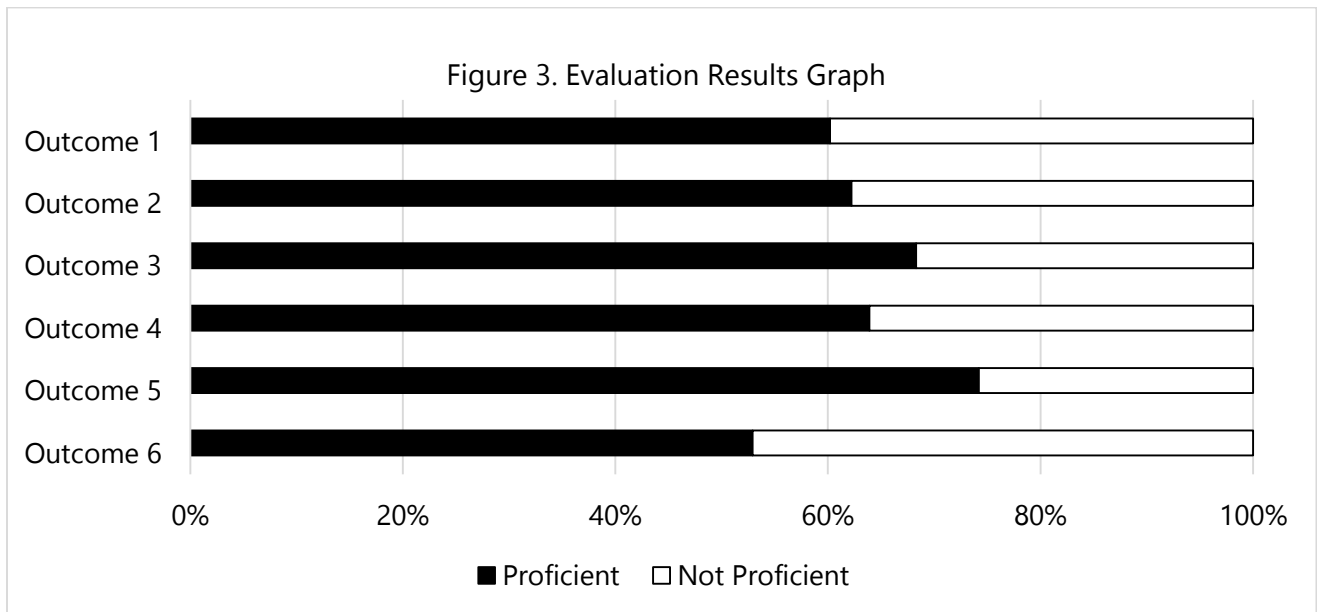


Figure 4. Evaluator Comments and Feedback

Outcome 1. Students will write a clear, declarative thesis statement.

- Thesis with direction vs. announcement (?) of type - struggle here.
- Some did not have a direct thesis statement but often had clear direction and focus.

Outcome 2. Students will integrate credible outside sources into their papers.

- Needs the word "effectively" added to make it more evaluative in a meaningful manner. Many "proficient" would be marked "not proficient" if that word was present.
- Mix - sometimes good integration of general not as substantive info, sometimes good writing without integration of support.

Outcome 3. Students will organize their ideas logically.

No comments

Outcome 4. Students will write persuasively.

No comments

Outcome 5. Student papers will contain few or no errors in mechanics and grammar.

No comments

Outcome 6. Students correctly documented outside sources using the designated citation format.

- A few papers using APA format seemed to use only certain features of APA documentation.
- I'm not sure why an instructor is teaching APA in an English 201 class. Course outcome stated that MLA is required.
- More success with APA than MLA.
- Some essays used APA, I marked it as correct (designated format) but with the assumption the instructor allowed it - as it was not in MLA.
- A few of these papers seemed to be in a rough draft stage with places left open to plug in sources. One student used personal knowledge as her key source and it was powerful, but I could not give her credit for "documented sources in designated citation format."

Other Comments

- Evaluator stated that one essay was labeled English 101. Scores were noted but not included in tally.

Summary

The English 201 pilot project produced the following course-level outcome assessment results:

- 60.2% of students assessed wrote a clear, declarative thesis statement.
- 62.2% of students assessed integrated credible outside sources into their papers.
- 68.3% of students assessed organized their ideas logically.
- 63.9% of students assessed wrote persuasively.
- 74.2% of student assessed had few or no errors in mechanics or grammar.
- 52.9% of students assessed correctly documented outside sources using the designated citation format.

This information can be used by the Department of English to focus a conversation about course-level outcomes and student learning.

Questions for Faculty Consideration

- Are the **course-level outcomes** understood by evaluators in the same way?
- Do the **course-level outcomes** accurately and meaningfully reflect student learning?
- Is there **variation across evaluators**? What can this variation be attributed to? How does it impact outcomes assessment?
- What is the department's **benchmark for proficiency** on course outcomes?
- What **themes of success** emerge from the assessment data? How can this be built on?
- Are there outcomes that should be **targeted for improvement**?
- What **resources** are needed to ensure improvements come to fruition?
- When it comes time in the **curriculum process for course revision**, what (if any) changes need to be made to this course?
- Did this process produce **meaningful data** for the Department of English? How can it be improved in the future?

Appendix A. Instructions

Spring 2020 English 201 Pilot Outcome Study Evaluation Sheet

Outcomes	Proficient	Not Proficient
Students will write a clear, declarative thesis statement.		
Students will integrate credible outside sources into their papers.		
Students will organize their ideas logically.		
Students will write persuasively.		
Student papers will contain few or no errors in mechanics and grammar.		
Students correctly documented outside sources using the designated citation format.		

Instructions for English 201 Pilot Outcomes Study for Spring 2020.

1. You have received a packet of English 201 essays. All identifying information has been redacted. The essays from the sample have been thoroughly mixed up, so the packet you have represents papers from several different instructors. The names of the students and the instructors participating in the study will never be revealed, and this applies to the reader evaluators as well.
2. Evaluate each essay for all six outcomes. You can mark the boxes as appropriate with a check mark or a single line. Each essay should receive six marks. You need not read the entire essay to determine the level of proficiency for each outcome.
3. Please feel free to make qualitative comments on this paper and return it with you tally in the enclosed postage paid envelope.
4. Please return the packets and scores, they will be delivered to the office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) for analysis. We hope to discuss the results at our English Department meeting in September or October.

Qualitative comments: Please write any comments below or on the back side of this paper. All comments will be included in the pilot study outcomes report generated by IRP.

Appendix B. Data

		Outcome 1. Thesis Statement (n=118)		Outcome 2. Credible Sources (n=119)		Outcome 3. Logical Org. (n=120)		Outcome 4. Persuasive Writing (n=119)		Outcome 5. Mech. & Grammar (n=120)		Outcome 6. Citation Format (n=119)	
Evaluator	Essays	Prof.	Not Prof.	Prof.	Not Prof.	Prof.	Not Prof.	Prof.	Not Prof.	Prof.	Not Prof.	Prof.	Not Prof.
1	17	12	5	12	5	13	4	17	0	14	3	5	12
2	16	9	7	8	8	11	6	12	4	7	9	6	10
3	17	10	7	11	6	12	5	15	2	16	1	4	13
4	17	13	4	11	6	13	4	12	5	17	1	11	6
5	18	6	11	9	9	12	6	4	14	8	10	9	9
6	17	11	6	9	8	16	1	13	4	11	6	12	5
7	17	10	7	14	3	5	12	3	14	16	1	16	1
SUM		71	47	74	45	82	38	76	43	89	31	63	56
Percentage		60.2%	39.8%	62.2%	37.8%	68.3%	31.7%	63.9%	36.1%	74.2%	25.8%	52.9%	47.1%

Note: Three faculty marked a different number of evaluations on one of the outcomes. For this reason, the number of essays and evaluations vary slightly across outcomes.