

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

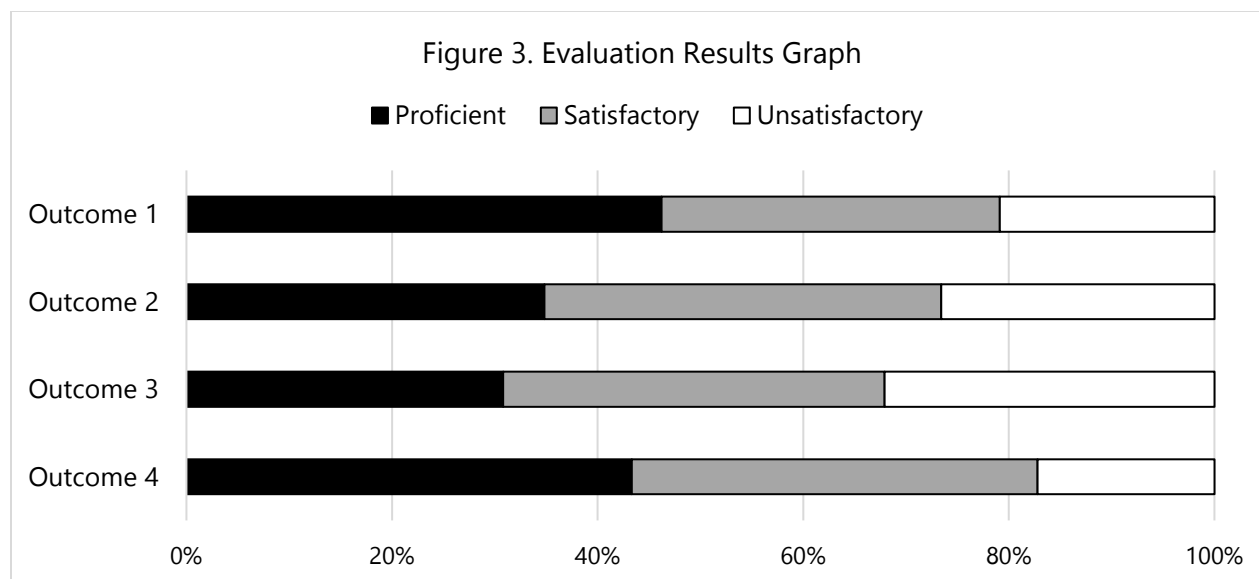


Figure 4. Evaluation Results Table – Proficient and Satisfactory Combined

	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%	