

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, MANHATTAN CAMPUS

Spring 2016

Assessment Report: FCWR 101

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Description:

This semester, we selected the departmental final exam and FCWR 101 for assessment. This course is integral to the core sequence and, as a nearly universal component of college life in the United States, it merits regular scrutiny.

Every section of FCWR 101 took the same final exam with two prompts (see Appendix 2 below) during the same exam period (Tues, 5/17, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). The sample for this report included exams from the three sections offered this semester for a total of 51 exams. (Some enrolled students were missing from this sample because they failed to attend on the exam date or took a make-up exam, which would involve a different prompt.)

Following the exam, three instructors evaluated their exams using a rubric (see Appendix 1 below) that reflects the current learning outcomes and goals for successful completion of this core writing course. They used four evaluative categories: "Thesis," "Paragraphing," "Idea Development," and "Grammar/Style/Mechanics." Within each category, three levels included criteria for each sub-score.

Results:

The results revealed a particular strength in thesis statement, with 96% of the exams rated a "3" for their focused thesis statement and general organization that stayed connected to this thesis.

The evaluation of the "Paragraphing" and "Idea Development" categories showed a split between the 3 and 2 score, which suggests a clear area for improvement.

The "Grammar/Mechanics/Style section exposed a significant, unanticipated weakness in the exam sample. Only 35% of the exams received a "3" score, and this category was the only one in which exams received the "1" score.

Based on the results, it seems clear that our emphasis on focused thesis statements and unity/coherence throughout the essay has yielded positive impact. However, we have room for growth beyond the essay's overall focus. Although there is evidence of solid unity and coherence at the thesis level, the transitions between and within paragraphs need strengthening.

We must continue to work on idea development that includes concrete, specific details and examples. To improve these results, we intend to introduce the exam topic earlier with selected readings to be discussed in class in the semester's final weeks.

Finally, we have learned that we must incorporate more editing/proofreading instruction into the course as well as grammar instruction. Students should enter 101 with grammar proficiency, but these results reveal a need for "refresher" lessons at the class and individual level. Additionally, we may ask instructors to incorporate editing and proofreading techniques more formally in the practice exam/exam process.

Appendix 1 - Scoring Directions, Rubric, and Scoring (in red)

New York Institute of Technology
Assessment of FCWR 101 Exit Exams- Spring 16

Instructors: for each exit exam, please assign a number and mark the blue book and a corresponding assessment sheet with that number. Complete an assessment form for every exam by scoring each section based on the description that applies under the four main assessment areas. Return the sheets to the envelope with the exams. Thank you.

Criteria and Score	3 (highest)	2	1 (lowest)
<p>Thesis</p> <p>Score:</p>	<p>The essay responds to the topic and is coherently organized around a focused thesis. The writer provides an introduction, body, and conclusion.</p> <p>96% (49/51) *</p>	<p>There is a thesis, but it is unfocused and without forecasting elements.</p> <p>4% (4/51)</p>	<p>The essay may respond to the topic but may not exhibit a clear thesis or logical pattern of organization.</p>
<p>Paragraphing</p> <p>Score:</p>	<p>Paragraphs are focused, developed, and related to the thesis. The writer uses transitions to signal relationships within and between paragraphs. Paragraphs achieve coherence through topic sentences.</p> <p>65% (33/51)</p>	<p>Paragraphing is inconsistent in its unity and coherence. There may be inadequate transitions between paragraphs. Topic sentences may be weak and unfocused.</p> <p>35% (18/51)</p>	<p>Paragraphs may lack focus and may be inappropriately divided or unevenly developed. Transitions between and within paragraphs are lacking.</p>
<p>Idea Development and Support</p> <p>Score:</p>	<p>The writer offers a range of thought, avoiding oversimplifications and distortions. Ideas are developed with specific details, and the writer shows the ability to generalize meaningfully about them.</p> <p>59% (29/51)</p>	<p>There are some weaknesses in supporting examples and concrete, specific details. Some ideas may be underdeveloped or repeated often.</p> <p>43% (22/51)</p>	<p>Ideas may be underdeveloped or repeated often. There is a distinct lack of concrete, specific details and supporting examples.</p>
<p>Grammar/Style /Mechanics</p> <p>Score:</p>	<p>Sentences reflect basic command of standard written English syntax and grammar. There are only intermittent errors in grammar, punctuation, syntax, and spelling.</p> <p>35% (18/51)</p>	<p>Some errors that appear to be due mainly to careless or rushed proofreading/editing.</p> <p>55% (28/51)</p>	<p>The essay exhibits patterns of major error in sentence structure (fragments or run-ons) or in grammar (verb forms, agreement, or tense) does not pass.</p> <p>10% (5/51)</p>

* Percent of total/number of responses

Appendix 2

EXAM PROMPTS

FCWR 101 Final Assessment Exam

Spring 2016

Important: On the cover of your bluebook, please print:

- Your name
- Your student I.D. number
- Your instructor's name, course, and section number
- Your current mailing address, email address, and telephone number

Choose ONE of the following topics, and write a 5+ paragraph essay that includes a focused, forecasting thesis in an introductory paragraph. Remember: make your main point clear to the audience. As you develop your essay, make sure that each body paragraph includes a topic sentence to focus and connect it to the main idea.

Be sure to show your brainstorming in the exam book, and proofread your essay for grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. To ensure readability, please write CLEARLY on every other line.

1. We are currently in a presidential election year and are surrounded by campaign messages addressing what candidates believe are important issues.

In your opinion, what are the three most significant issues facing our country today? In your essay, be sure to support your choices by indicating why you view these issues as the most significant ones with concrete, specific examples from your observation and experience.

2. In college classrooms, students are required to think critically – that is, to ask questions and to examine information beyond its surface meaning.

In your view, what two or three classroom strategies most effectively encourage students to engage in critical thinking? Identify the strategies clearly in your thesis statement. Your body paragraphs should explain how these strategies achieve this goal by providing concrete, specific evidence from your experience and/or observation.