

Writing Program Assessment Report 2014

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Background and Processes

Since 2007, students in the University of Denver Writing Program have created writing portfolios at the end of their first year writing sequence. Initially, all faculty participated in portfolio scoring, and we used the results to generate discussions about pedagogy and to adjust the wording and emphasis of course goals. In 2008, our program was awarded the highly selective CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence. One criterion is “The program uses effective, ongoing assessment,” and our robust portfolio system was cited as a national model.

From 2008 to 2011, a team of writing program faculty participated in Cohort V of the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research. Team members learned more about the use of ePortfolios in composition and conducted several research projects to answer questions about how we can use our WRIT portfolios to foster student learning and professional development. We used multiple sources of information and multiple methods, including: scoring randomly selected portfolios; conducting discourse analyses of selected portfolios; scoring using descriptive rubrics for introductory essays; interviewing students; collected open written responses from faculty; interviewing faculty; and analyzing syllabi. We shared our findings with the faculty and with our coalition peers at regular cohort meetings. Our final report to the coalition, along with a number of documents and presentations related to the initiative, is available under the Electronic Portfolio Research tab on the Writing Program Portfolio site.

Based on findings from this research, we made several changes to the portfolio assessment process. We responded to faculty concerns about how well the final portfolio prompt fit with our variety of approaches by developing multiple prompt options. Now, faculty can choose to have their students respond to the “Making a Case” or “Reflective” prompt, or they can design an individual prompt that complements their course design while still asking students to address their understanding of course goals (see Appendix A). Because the existing assessment focused only on WRIT 1133, we designed a final portfolio prompt for WRIT 1122 that would allow us to assess students in the middle of our sequence, and also help them develop habits of reflection that would prepare them for the final portfolio in WRIT 1133 (see Appendix B).

During this time, we also changed the portfolio scoring process. Rather than having all faculty participate in scoring during fall workdays and meetings, a group of volunteer lecturers scored portfolios in June. The change addressed ‘assessment fatigue’ from some lecturers and we expected fewer scorers would lead to greater consistency. This shift also allowed the assessment committee and assistant director to analyze the results and

prepare for reports and faculty discussions earlier in the fall term. This more focused assessment team also began examining and coding portfolio features related to goals we'd like to improve—notably addressing specific audiences. We've shared scoring and coding results every fall with the entire writing program faculty, and those findings have been the focus of several hours of conversation and professional development activities each term.

While these conversations were fruitful, the Curriculum and Assessment Committee began discussing ways to get all faculty more engaged with assessment again. We had already shifted the focus of our fall assessment discussions from “reporting the numbers” to “developing generative questions,” and last year we asked lecturers to review and discuss selected portfolios. Because we had gathered several years worth of fairly similar scoring and coding results, it seemed reasonable to start completing our standard scoring of a random sample every second or third year and to conduct assessments that would involve all faculty the rest of the time. With an eye toward current best practices in the field of composition/writing studies, the Curriculum and Assessment Committee proposed an alternative approach to year-end portfolio assessment procedures (see Appendix C). As a pilot project, beginning in 2014, we began conducting assessments that are more clearly in line with current reflective practitioner models. The revised procedure complements previous assessment efforts, which produced scores, with an assessment that produces more qualitative results that embeds pedagogical revisions and reflection directly into the evaluative process.

In 2014, we also began discussions with Rob Flaherty about how our existing assessment procedures, which are based on the course goals for WRIT 1122 and WRIT 1133, do not directly align with the three outcomes for the Writing and Rhetoric requirement listed in the “Common Curriculum at DU.” To address this issue, the assistant director, in consultation with the Curriculum and Assessment Committee, Doug Hesse, and Rob Flaherty, designed an assessment that called for faculty to report student performance on the common curriculum outcomes more specifically (see Appendix D). Because this new system was implemented in the spring, faculty completed only the process for WRIT 1133 this year, though an instrument was created for WRIT 1122 as well. We will solicit feedback on this reporting process as an assessment method during an upcoming faculty meeting and determine 1) if/how the common curriculum outcomes for our program should be revised, 2) if faculty reporting is an appropriate method for our program, and 3) if/how the reporting system should be improved.

In order to provide additional context for our current assessment procedures and results, we have included our 2013 assessment report as Appendix E. (We can happily furnish reports for 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 on request.) This report includes scores from 2012 and 2011 for comparison. It may be noted that scores decreased somewhat during this span. We suspect these changes are the result of several factors: an increasing number of the strongest students placing out of one or more WRIT classes; changing admissions criteria at DU; a greater number of new faculty in the program resulting in less consistency in how portfolios are administered; increasing rigor in our classes and higher standards among scorers. We also know that, in earlier years, our discussions suggested faculty considered some goals more important than other ones. For example, faculty seemed to

play less attention to the goal of writing for public as well as academic audiences in WRIT 1133. In their attempt to devote more attention to these goals, they might have shorted the amount of attention to previous ones. We've discussed whether we might, in fact, have too many goals. In short, based on this analysis and other evidence (including annual teaching portfolios that include two to four-page discussions of how specific courses were taught, why, and with what effect), we are not concerned that the quality of instruction provided by the Writing Program has decreased. Toward the end of the Appendix E report, you will see the types of questions generated by the portfolio scorers to prompt further discussion, some of which informed our decision to alternate between quantitative scoring and more qualitative assessment of portfolios.

Assessment Results for 2014

Common Curriculum Outcomes Report for WRIT 1133/1633/1733

Faculty in the Writing Program were asked to follow the directions below to report student proficiency on Common Curriculum outcomes for each section taught:

For each outcome listed below, please indicate how many students performed at each level. Base your assessment of Outcomes 1-4 on their final course portfolios, major course projects, and exercises. Base your assessment of Outcome 5 on their process through drafts leading to the final versions of major papers and the portfolio, and their proficiency with peer review and/or collaboration.

Lecturers entered their reports in a Google Form, and results were analyzed in Excel. There were minor discrepancies in numbers reported. According to the Schedule Archives, 1135 students were enrolled in sections of WRIT 1133, 1633, and 1733. A few lecturers did not complete the assessment for one or more of their sections, which resulted in an *n* of 981, or 86% of all students, still a very high and credible rate. There were some entry errors, so the total number of students recorded per outcome ranged from 974-982. While recognizing that some students must have accidentally been omitted or added twice, we have decided to report whole numbers and percentages for each outcome as they were entered by lecturers.

1. Ability to analyze rhetorical strategies used in a variety of situations/texts. (Outcome 1A)
n=974

Excellent	391	40%
Good	372	38%
Competent	171	18%
Weak	40	4%

2. Ability to use appropriate rhetorical strategies in his/her own writing. (Outcome 1B)
n=977

Excellent	374	38%
Good	380	39%
Competent	176	18%
Weak	47	5%

3. Ability to analyze research and writing strategies used in a range of academic traditions.
(Outcome 2A) n=977

Excellent	400	41%
Good	359	37%
Competent	166	17%
Weak	52	5%

4. Ability to use research and writing strategies in a range of academic traditions in their
own writing. (Outcome 2B) n=976

Excellent	389	40%
Good	359	37%
Competent	174	18%
Weak	54	5%

5. Ability to engage in effective writing processes including generating, shaping, revising,
editing, proofreading, and working with other writers. (Outcome 3) n=982

Excellent	409	42%
Good	368	37%
Competent	157	16%
Weak	48	5%

These findings suggest that students were very successful in meeting the outcomes for WRIT 1133, 1633, and 1733, and our initial review of lecturers' reflective writing also indicate that students performed well in those courses. We note a gap between the range of these scores and the range of previous assessments. In previous years, when we scored randomly selected portfolios on course goals closely related to these outcomes, the combined ratings were not as high. For example, the 2013 ratings below suggest that 11% would be considered poor/weak and only 19% were strong or very strong. We suspect that students didn't change vastly between this year and last.

2013 Combined Assessment (n=115)	
Poor	13 (11%)
Passing	47 (41%)
Good	33 (29%)

Strong	15 (13%)
Very Strong	7 (6%)

On September 9, 2014, we held a two-hour faculty meeting discussing the findings. We discussed performance level definitions, expectations, and the basis of lecturer ratings, focusing on four questions:

- Do the Common Curriculum Outcomes adequately capture the content of our courses or should they be changed/reworded?
- Did you find this process of assessing your students using this method useful/meaningful?
- Do you think these results accurately capture the performance of students in your spring classes?
- What can we do to improve the content or logistics of this assessment?

We noted that the Common Curriculum outcomes are much more broadly worded than our individual course goals and that, as a result, they invite more extrapolation. In general, faculty did not believe this assessment approach added as much value to their teaching as did either the previous approach or the newly instituted qualitative approach, either for themselves individually in completing the process or for the program in interpreting the combined results. We thought that the results accurately reflected overall performance in our classes. In terms of improving the content or logistics of the assessment, some fine-tuning would be to have direct conversations with faculty whose reports seemed unrealistic. (For example, one adjunct lecturer who did not attend the meeting where this system was introduced reported that all but one or two students were excellent on all outcomes.) However, there was generally agreement that this approach was less meaningful than more the thorough analysis of individual portfolios. We also thought the language of the common curriculum learning outcomes, which were written with only some input from our program, might be revised. We ran out of time for specific wording proposals during the September 9 meeting, but the program's Curriculum and Assessment Committee has taken that up.

Faculty Portfolio Reflection

Over half of the faculty participated in a June, 2014, workshop to review their selected portfolios, draft initial reflections, and discuss salient features of strong, competent, and weak portfolios. Each lecturer added his/her writing to a shared document, and the remaining lecturers added their reflections in August. We collected over 100 pages of faculty writing about their students' portfolios. A review of this writing indicates that lecturers are engaging in these reflections thoughtfully. Most have described how the majority of their students are producing strong writing, identifying traits that distinguish the strongest portfolios.

The entire faculty met two hours on September 11, 2014, to discuss selected portfolios and generated themes that emerged among multiple faculty. Members of the Curriculum and

Assessment committee facilitated small group discussions, and the entire group addressed several questions:

- Reflect on the three portfolios of your students, and share what stands out as strengths and weaknesses in your sample; why did you pick these three as representative in some way of strong, average, and weak portfolios? Discuss as a group what patterns you see emerging as common features of strong, average, and weak portfolios.
- Which course goals did you and your colleagues seem to emphasize most in your reflections?
- Which values/features that *aren't* in the course goals did you discuss?
- What did you find useful about selecting and reflecting on your representative portfolios?
- What did you find useful about reading your colleagues' reflections and discussing the portfolios?
- How might this assessment process influence your teaching in the coming year?
- Do you have suggestions for improving this process in the future?

These questions resulted in an extraordinarily rich discussion, so much so that we will continue it for at least two more faculty meetings. At the end of our conversation on 9/11/14, though, we had five pages of writing about several of them. As an example, following are parts of ten responses to the question about how these assessment findings will influence their teaching:

- ... I found myself drawn to qualities of voice and ambition for the very best portfolios, which made me wonder how much I actually taught those in class. ... The next time I teach how I might better help students find the kinds of topics and foci that can qualify them for better grades. ...
- ... I valued style and depth of research in my students portfolios, and these criteria help differentiate the strong, good, and weak portfolios. I imagine emphasizing these criteria even more explicitly in my portfolio assignment. ...
- ... It reminded me that perhaps I could be more transparent with my students about what I value. There is a way, I'm sure, and one that I'll work toward, to make my grading rubrics more in line with what I wrote in this assessment activity. ...
- ... To be honest, the process of reading artifact essays and discussing patterns and gaps with a small group of other faculty was much more valuable to me than the aggregate numbers that come from scoring. When I saw, up close, the vast differences in my students' demonstration of synthesis, I recognized that I need to spend more time on synthesis. ...
- ... The nuance was in how I looked at research. The processes of doing research are something that I value and teach, but seeing things that I ask my students to do but don't teach in class (although I teach in responding to students in written comments) makes me rethink how I might offer students more direct instruction for interpreting research findings. ...
- ... [I'll] re-design assignment prompts in a way that would more effectively put me in line with what other teachers are doing, and that would more fully test students'

ability to address certain goals that, perhaps, in prior assignments, they hadn't been as clearly challenged to address. . . .

- . . . I found that I value style as a marker of excellent writing, but it is not integral to my teaching, which emphasizes higher order concerns (audience, purpose, writing process, evidence, etc.). I find this discrepancy disconcerting and feel compelled to adjust my teaching to help students recognize the connections between form and content. . . .
- . . . For example, I might include some activities where students are able to revise in class, I might add additional peer reviews, or I might further make sure that my main energy in commenting papers is directed at making sure that this work will be revised further (rather than in putting primary commenting energy into justifying final grades). This seems to point towards possibly continuing a portfolio style grading process, rather than grading papers individually. . . .
- . . . Looking at my students' work more holistically (as opposed to searching for the demonstration of a particular goal) encouraged me to consider both higher and lower order concerns. My discussion dealt initially with style—something I value but don't often articulate. . . .
- . . . I do think that this process has helped me further understand my own teaching goals—so I can more honestly talk to my students about what I value, what I think determines “good writing” and successful learning. I will also adjust my learning objectives (I include these in my syllabi in addition to the program's course learning objectives) to make these personal pedagogical goals transparent. . . .

There's clear evidence, then, that this assessment process has yielded information that is shaping teaching at the level of individual faculty and courses. During the remainder of September, committee members will further both the individual and combined reflection document, making program-wide conclusions and suggestions for faculty development or curricular revision.

Appendix A WRIT xx33 Portfolio Prompts

Option 1: “Making a Case”

What is the rhetorical situation?

Create a portfolio that shows a group of DU writing instructors, including your own professor, how well you have achieved the goals of WRIT 1133. Your readers will find two ingredients most helpful and convincing. (1) They’ll want to read several examples of your writing, and (2) they’ll want to read your analysis and discussion of those examples. Together, these ingredients should show your audience how well you’ve achieved the course’s goals.

What should I include in the portfolio?

Your final portfolio should consist of four pieces of writing. Please include three papers you have already written, one of which may come from a DU course other than WRIT 1133 (for example, from WRIT 1122 or from any other course). You will also include an introductory essay that describes and analyses those papers. To be most effective, the introductory essay will probably need to be about three to four pages long.

How should I select papers for the portfolio?

Choose three papers that together demonstrate your understanding and accomplishment of three goals of 1133:

- Demonstrate a practical understanding of multiple academic research traditions—text-based, qualitative, and quantitative—through having written in least two of those traditions.
- Demonstrate a practical understanding of appropriate rhetorical choices in writing for specific academic audiences and specific popular, civic, or professional audiences, through both analysis and performance.
- Demonstrate proficiency in finding, evaluating, synthesizing, critiquing, and documenting published sources appropriate to given rhetorical situations.

How should I write the introductory essay?

Your introductory essay should:

- introduce the papers you’ve selected, explaining the assignment and/or rhetorical situation for the work. Remember that most of your readers will be unfamiliar with your class.

- use those papers as evidence to illustrate the extent to which your writing has met the course goals. Please refer to or quote specific elements from your papers to support your claims.

Because, in effect, you're making an argument about your writing, your readers will value an ethos characterized by honesty, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness. In addition to discussing the strengths of your work this quarter, you might also discuss limitations of your papers. This kind of discussion will help us understand how we might improve our courses.

How should I submit my portfolio?

Although you will be presenting four different writings, please cut and paste them into **one** single document. Appearing first in this document should be your Introduction and Analysis. The order of the other documents is up to you.

Upload that file into to the Assess-It system following instructions in the email from the Writing Program.

Thank you!

Option 2: "Reflective"

What is the rhetorical situation?

How have you developed as a writer and researcher during WRIT 1133? Create a portfolio in which you explore this question. Your professor and other DU writing instructors will be very interested in your self-analysis and reflection. To do this well, you'll need to select several examples of your writing, and you'll need to explain and discuss the pieces you've chosen.

What should I include in the portfolio?

Your final portfolio should consist of four pieces of writing. Please include three papers you have already written, one of which may come from a DU course other than WRIT 1133 (for example, from WRIT 1122 or from any other course). The fourth piece is a reflective essay that describes and analyses those papers. To be most effective, the reflection will probably need to be about three to four pages long.

How should I select papers for the portfolio?

Choose three papers that illustrate the writing and research skills you developed in the course.

How should I write the reflective essay?

Your reflective essay should:

- Introduce the papers you've selected, explaining the assignment and/or rhetorical situation for the work. Remember that most of your readers will be unfamiliar with your class.
- Reflect on how you have learned and met course goals through writing these assignments. Please refer to or quote specific elements from your papers to illustrate your observations. You might also talk about your drafting processes and what you learned or how you grew during the course. Try to connect your work to the concepts and strategies that your class emphasized.

Your readers will value an ethos characterized by honesty, thoroughness, and thoughtfulness. In addition to discussing the strengths of your work this quarter, you might also discuss limitations of your papers. You might also reflect on how your writing and researching abilities transfer to future writing situations.

How should I submit my portfolio?

Although you will be presenting four different writings, please cut and paste them into **one** single document. Appearing first in this document should be your Reflection and Analysis. The order of the other documents is up to you.

Upload that file into to the Assess-It system following instructions in the email from the Writing Program.

Thank you!

Option 3: Created by Individual Professor

Note to Colleagues: The third portfolio option allows you to design your own portfolio. As you write your prompt, please meet some important criteria:

1. Students must select and present two or more pieces of writing they produced in the course.
2. Students must include at least three pages of writing about the pieces they've chosen. This may also include writing about the course itself.
3. The portfolio should help readers understand how students have met the goals of WRIT 1133.
4. Students should upload that file into to the Assess-It system following instructions in the email from the Writing Program.

In designing your own portfolio and prompt, you could combine prompts 1 and 2 and ask students to argue for how their portfolio demonstrates how their writing meets course

goals **and** ask students to reflect on how they have grown as a writer. Or you could create an entirely different option of your own choosing, as long as it meets the criteria above.

Appendix B
WRIT xx22 Portfolio Prompt

Your professor and the Writing Program faculty assess WRIT 1122/1622 by reading student writings at the end of the course. To help this effort and to demonstrate your writing accomplishments, please create a brief portfolio that contains at least three pieces of writing.

At least two of them should be projects you completed during WRIT 1122/1622 this quarter; choose works that best show either 1) your ability to analyze the rhetorical strategies in texts written by others, or 2) your ability to produce effective texts for specific rhetorical situations, or 3) both.

The third piece of writing should be a short Introductory Essay that explains the first two. For each piece: 1) briefly describe the assignment (after all, most of your readers won't be familiar with your course); 2) explain the rhetorical situation for your work; and 3) discuss elements of your writing that illustrate your ability to analyze rhetorical strategies, to produce rhetorically effective texts, or both.

Please cut and paste all of these papers into one file. First should be your Short Introductory Essay, followed by the other pieces, in the order that makes sense to you. (NOTE: In the rare event that you cannot combine one of your papers into this portfolio, due to the incompatibility of programs, please upload it separately and add a note in your Portfolio document directing readers to view that file as well).

Appendix C
Proposal for Qualitative Portfolio Assessment Pilot

Proposed Assessment Practices for Fall 2014

Curriculum and Assessment Committee

With an eye toward current best practices in the field of composition/writing studies, the Curriculum and Assessment Committee proposes an alternative approach to year-end portfolio assessment procedures. As a pilot project, beginning in fall 2014, we propose assessment that is more clearly in line with current reflective practitioner models of assessment. The goal of this revised procedure would be in addition to previous assessment efforts, which produced a collection of numerical scores, to an assessment that would produce more descriptive, qualitative results.

The committee also proposes this change with an eye toward the potential benefits practitioner participants themselves may receive from assessment activities. By requesting that all faculty be included in the assessment process, rather than relying on a select few volunteers, our hope is that the faculty body will not only feel a greater sense of involvement, but will also then have the exigence to implement possible change in their own pedagogy based on these assessment activities. The committee also anticipates that faculty members will benefit from assessment discussions that allow for contextualization, reflection, and acknowledgement of pedagogical processes.

Faculty members will select three of their own students' 1133 portfolios from those collected in spring 2014: one portfolio that demonstrates strong work, one that demonstrates average work, and one that demonstrates weak or below-average work. During the faculty retreat, faculty members will use these portfolios as fodder for discussion in faculty roundtables, and will also use them as evidence in an individually written reflective piece (which might possibly take the place of some elements of the annual review document).

At the retreat, faculty will meet in groups of three or four for discussion, and then, if time permits, may begin drafting reflections on the same day. We would like new faculty members to participate in the roundtable discussions, but their reflections will likely be geared toward addressing what they've gleaned from the program based on roundtable discussions, how what they might bring to the program in order to address any issues they've observed.

The CAC plans on providing some conversation starters for roundtable discussion, but would like to leave these prompts open-ended in order to observe where the conversation organically progresses. The conversation prompt will likely be along these lines: Reflect on

the three portfolios of your students, and share what stands out as strengths and weaknesses in your sample; why did you pick these three as representative in some way of strong, average, and weak portfolios? Discuss as a group what patterns you see emerging as common features of strong, average, and weak portfolios.

The CAC suggests introducing the pilot in one of the spring faculty meetings, and having the fall retreat date planned early so that we can better ensure all faculty members are able to attend. In the fall retreat roundtables, one member from the CAC will be at each table and the committee will meet back to collate and report on impressions from the informal conversations that occur.

After the roundtable is complete and faculty members have submitted their reflections (names will be removed for CAC assessment purposes), the CAC will pull from these two sources of data and use grounded theory methodology (GTM) to discover common themes, which can then be shared with the faculty body for further discussion.

Appendix D
New Common Curriculum Assessment

DU Writing Program Common Curriculum Assessment
Adopted April 2014 for Implementation in June 2014

[“The Common Curriculum At DU”](#) states that students who complete the Writing & Rhetoric requirement will be able to:

1. Analyze strategies used in a variety of rhetorical situations and employ those principles in their own writings and communications.
2. Analyze research and writing strategies used in a range of academic traditions and use those strategies in their writings.
3. Adapt, to specific situations, a strong repertory of writing processes, including generating, shaping, revising, editing, proofreading, and working with other writers.

To assess student performance, all faculty members will complete the following assessment rubrics for each of their sections.

Performance Levels

Assessment of student performance levels may be based on: formal assignments, informal writing activities, and participation in relevant class activities.

Excellent: Student consistently demonstrates an exemplary level of ability in written assignments and/or class activities.

Good: Student generally demonstrates a high level of ability in written assignments and/or class activities; OR student excels in some situations/aspects of the outcome and performs competently in others.

Competent: Student generally demonstrates an average level of ability in written assignments and/or class activities; OR student performs strongly in some situations/aspects of the outcome but is weak in others.

Weak: Student consistently demonstrates a below average level of ability in written assignments and/or class activities.

WRIT 1122/1622

For each outcome listed below, please indicate how many students performed at each level. Base your assessment of Outcomes 1 and 2 on their final course portfolios and major course projects. Base your assessment of Outcome 3 on their process through drafts leading to the final versions of major papers and the portfolio, and their proficiency with peer review and/or collaboration.

1. Ability to analyze rhetorical strategies used in a variety of situations/texts. (Outcome 1A)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

2. Ability to use appropriate rhetorical strategies in his/her own writing. (Outcome 1B)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

3. Ability to engage in effective writing processes including generating, shaping, revising, editing, proofreading, and working with other writers. (Outcome 3)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

WRIT 1133/1633/1733

For each outcome listed below, please indicate how many students performed at each level. Base your assessment of Outcomes 1-4 on their final course portfolios, major course projects, and exercises. Base your assessment of Outcome 5 on their process through drafts leading to the final versions of major papers and the portfolio, and their proficiency with peer review and/or collaboration.

1. Ability to analyze rhetorical strategies used in a variety of situations/texts. (Outcome 1A)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

2. Ability to use appropriate rhetorical strategies in his/her own writing. (Outcome 1B)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

3. Ability to analyze research and writing strategies used in a range of academic traditions.
(Outcome 2A)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

4. Ability to use research and writing strategies in a range of academic traditions in their own writing.
(Outcome 2B)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

5. Ability to engage in effective writing processes including generating, shaping, revising, editing, proofreading, and working with other writers. (Outcome 3)

Excellent
Good
Competent
Weak

Appendix E
2013 Assessment

Spring 2013: 1122 and 1133 Portfolio Assessment Report
June 17, 2013

In June 2013, an assessment team (Brad Benz, Jennifer Campbell, April Chapman-Ludwig, Richard Colby, David Daniels, Megan Kelly, Katie Riddle, and Rebekah Shultz-Colby) scored 115 portfolios from the spring sections of WRIT 1133 and 120 portfolios from winter sections of WRIT 1122. For 1133, we again decided to pull our sample only from courses that responded to the reflective or case prompts. We applied the same rubric that was used in 2010 -2012, with the exception of using the more specific language to consider specific academic audiences and specific professional, civic, and popular audiences.

In addition to scoring, we repeated a 2012 coding project examining how students address audience. Below, we present: 1) the 1133 goals scores for 2013—in aggregate and by portfolio type, followed by previous years’ scores for comparison; 2) combined assessments for 2013, followed by previous years’ scores; 3) 1122 portfolio scores for 2013, followed by previous years’ scores for comparison; 4) audience coding results from 1122 and 1133.

WRIT 1133

2013 1133 Goal Scores

Total n=115, Reflective n=53, Making a Case n=62
Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Goal	Score	All	Reflective	Case
Traditions	1	20 (17%)	10 (19%)	10 (16%)
Mean 2.34	2	42 (36.5%)	20 (38%)	22 (35%)
2012 Mean 2.4	3	47 (41%)	21 (40%)	26 (42%)
	4	6 (5%)	2 (4%)	4 (6%)
Audience	1	34 (29.5%)	18 (34%)	16 (26%)
Mean 2.01	2	49 (42.5%)	23 (43%)	26 (42%)
2012 Mean 2.1	3	29 (25%)	11 (21%)	18 (30%)
	4	3 (2.5%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)
Sources	1	11 (9.5%)	4 (8%)	7 (11%)
Mean 2.3	2	64 (55.5%)	31 (58%)	33 (53%)

2012 Mean 2.6	3	34 (29.5%)	16 (30%)	18 (29%)
	4	6 (5%)	2 (4%)	4 (6%)

On the whole, students are meeting the program’s goals by the end of WRIT 1133. Eighty percent are passing or above in demonstrating a practical understanding of multiple research traditions, while 89% are passing or above in working with sources. The audience goal continues to earn the lowest scores, with only 66% of students demonstrating a passing or higher understanding of differences between writing for specific academic and specific non-academic audiences.

Mean scores for all goals are lower than in previous years, but not significantly. In the fall, we should discuss strategies for helping our students work more effectively with sources and articulate their understanding of source use. The scores for portfolios responding to the “Making a Case” prompt were slightly higher than for those responding to the “Reflective” prompt, but the discrepancy was smaller than last year. Lower-scoring portfolios often didn’t address course goals directly in their introductory essays. A few portfolios didn’t include discernable introductory essays, but the rest ranged from 381 to 2,147 words, with an average of 1,016 words.

2012 1133 Goal Scores

Total n=119, Reflective n=59, Making a Case n=60
Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Goal	Score	All	Reflective	Case
Traditions	1	18 (15%)	13 (22%)	5 (8%)
Mean 2.4	2	42 (35%)	25 (42%)	17 (28%)
2011 Mean 2.58	3	48 (40%)	19 (32%)	29 (48%)
	4	11 (9%)	2 (3%)	9 (15%)
Audience	1	46 (39%)	36 (61%)	10 (17%)
Mean 2.1	2	27 (23%)	9 (15%)	18 (30%)
2011 Mean 2.3	3	39 (33%)	13 (22%)	26 (43%)
	4	7 (6%)	1 (2%)	6 (10%)
Sources	1	11 (9%)	8 (14%)	3 (5%)
Mean 2.5	2	53 (45%)	28 (47%)	25 (42%)
2011 Mean 2.6	3	44 (37%)	21 (36%)	23 (38%)
	4	11 (9%)	2 (3%)	9 (15%)

2011 Goal Scores (n=119)

Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Goal	Score	All
Traditions	1	16 (13%)
Mean 2.58	2	36 (30%)
	3	54 (42%)
	4	14 (11%)
Audience	1	33 (28%)
Mean 2.32	2	35 (29%)
	3	37 (31%)
	4	16 (13%)
Sources	1	13 (11%)
Mean 2.6	2	43 (36%)
	3	48 (40%)
	4	17 (14%)

Combined Assessment

To determine combined assessment, we added all three goals scores and ranked them by the following formula: (≥ 10 =Very Strong; 8-9=Strong; 6-7=Good; 4-5=Passing; ≤ 3 =Poor) Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

2013 Combined Assessment (n=115)	Reflective (n=53)	Case (n=62)
Poor 13 (11%)	7 (13%)	6 (10%)
Passing 47 (41%)	23 (43%)	24 (39%)
Good 33 (29%)	14 (26%)	19 (31%)
Strong 15 (13%)	7 (13%)	8 (13%)
Very Strong 7 (6%)	2 (4%)	5 (8%)

2012 Combined Assessment (n=119)	R	C
Poor	13 (11%)	12 (20%)
Passing	37 (31%)	25 (42%)
Good	39 (33%)	14 (24%)
		25 (41%)

Strong	19 (16%)	7 (12%)	12 (20%)
Very Strong	11 (9%)	1 (1.5%)	10 (16.5%)

2011

Combined Assessment
(n=121)

Poor	13 (11%)
Passing	26 (21%)
Good	42 (35%)
Strong	20 (17%)
Very Strong	20 (17%)

In terms of combined assessment, we are particularly consistent in the number of portfolios earning a 'poor' rating. This year, the number of 'passing' scores increased, while the percentage earning 'good' or better decreased. The lower scores overall could be the result of more rigorous scoring, less time and discussion of the final portfolios in the spring, or several other factors.

WRIT 1122

We scored 120 portfolios from WRIT 1122, using the same rubric from previous years. First, scorers identified if the student demonstrated the ability to analyze others' rhetorical choices (prompt A), the ability to make effective rhetorical choices in their own writing (prompt B), or both (prompt C). We then applied the appropriate evaluative criteria. We applied the same rubric to all portfolios for the additional goals of source use and editing/proofreading. If the evidence essays did not use sources, we entered a zero and didn't include those in the scoring statistics.

2013 (n=120)

Prompt A	10
Prompt B	55
Prompt C	55

	Rhetoric Score	Source Use	Editing/proofreading
0		12	
1	12 (10%)	21 (19.5%)	2 (1.5%)
2	51 (42.5%)	49 (45%)	35 (29%)
3	51 (42.5%)	36 (33%)	80 (66.5%)
4	5 (5%)	2 (2%)	3 (2.5%)

2012 Scores (n=105)

Rhet	Source	Edit
1 - 1.5%	1 - 12.5%	1 - 4%
2 - 43%	2 - 30%	2 - 31.5%
3 - 46%	3 - 45.5%	3 - 52%

4 - 9.5%

4 - 11.5%

4 - 12%

We are meeting our WRIT 1122 goals quite successfully. Ninety percent of portfolios earned passing or better in regard to their understanding of rhetorical analysis and/or rhetorical strategies, while 80.5% of portfolios that used published sources did so at a level considered passing or above, and nearly all students demonstrate a passing or better ability to edit and proofread their writing. Fewer portfolios earned the highest rating on all criteria, however, while larger numbers fell into the 'not demonstrated' category. As with the 1133 portfolio results, this could be due to sampling, strict scoring, or other factors, but scorers did note that many introductory essays failed to define the rhetorical situation for their work, so we may continue to discuss articulation of rhetorical situations and strategies, as well as the role of source use in 1122.

Audience Coding

Because we completed coding related to audience last summer, and in the fall discussed our findings and strategies for addressing the audience goal, we repeated the audience coding for 2013 portfolios. We ended up coding 87 portfolios from 1133 (n=253 essays) and 90 portfolios from 1122 (~180 essays). Each essay was coded separately, with codes for student identification of audience and features related to audience discussed based on the intro essay and any headnotes/cover memos.

WRIT 1133

Course

For 1133, we began by coding which course for which the student said the evidence essay was written. Of the 251 essays coded, as would be expected, 216 were written for 1133, while 23 were written in 1122, and 12 were written for another course. As we were scoring portfolios, the writings from courses other than WRIT 1133 proved somewhat problematic, and the assessment team would like to initiate a discussion of limiting the 1133 portfolios to writing from that course.

Apparent Audience

For this item, we asked coders to look at the evidence essays before reading the intro or any other notes and indicate if they would assume the piece was written for. There were ten instances where the student's identified audience didn't match with the coder's assumed audience; these mostly involved an academic/professional mismatch or a professional/popular mismatch, which isn't surprising.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Academic audience (beyond instructor) | 151 (60%) |
| 2. Instructor only | 28 (11%) |
| 3. Professional audience | 14 (5.5%) |
| 4. Civic/popular audience | 58 (23%) |

Identified Audience

We used a more specific coding system to capture how students identified the audience for each paper (or not):

1. General Academic Audience	35 (14%)
2. Specific Academic Audience	17 (7%)
3. Professor Only	6 (2%)
4. General Professional Audience	9 (3.5%)
5. Specific Professional Audience	5 (2%)
6. General Civic/Popular Audience	13 (5%)
7. Specific Civic/Popular Audience	24 (9.5%)
8. Audience is not identified	142 (56.5%)

Students failed to identify an audience for 56.5% of the evidence essays; this is almost exactly the same percentage from last year (56.2%), which indicates that we still need to work on getting students to identify target audience more consistently. Also like last year, we found that students are almost twice as likely to identify a specific audience for popular/civic writing, but to identify academic audiences only in general terms.

Features Discussed

When students did identify an audience (n=109), we then recorded which features of their writing they discussed in relation to audience. Note that students may have mentioned more than one feature.

1. Content	55 (50.5%)
2. Organization and/or Format	34 (31%)
3. Source use	27 (25%)
4. Tone/Style	41 (37.5%)
5. Length	6 (5.5%)
6. Other (4=method, 1=rhetoric)	5 (4.5%)

All of these features were discussed more in these portfolios than they had been in portfolios from last year, indicating that when students did identify and discuss audience, they did so in more detail. This aspect of the coding is encouraging, however, on the whole it seems that our refinement of the audience goal language and discussions of the audience goal in the fall did not lead to the desired improvement in our students' performance in this area.

WRIT 1122

We followed the same procedure for essays in 87 portfolios from WRIT 1122, except for omitting the course identification. This resulted in the following coding for 172 essays.

Apparent Audience

1. Academic audience (beyond instructor)	49 (28.5%)
2. Instructor only	26 (15%)
3. Professional audience	10 (6%)
4. Civic/popular audience	87 (50.5%)

Identified Audience

1. General Academic Audience	14 (8%)
2. Specific Academic Audience	8 (5%)
3. Professor Only	9 (5%)
4. General Professional Audience	1 (.5%)
5. Specific Professional Audience	7 (4%)
6. General Civic/Popular Audience	25 (15%)
7. Specific Civic/Popular Audience	38 (23%)
8. Audience is not identified	67 (40%)

Forty percent of essays coded did not have an audience identified by the student. Three identified multiple, sometimes conflicting audiences, so they aren't included above. Our favorite was written for "grandmothers, politicians, scholars, and bus drivers." Once again, however, when students did specify an audience, those matched up quite well with the coder's assumed audience (there were 6 mismatches, but again they were generally in the blurrier distinctions like academic/instructor or professional/civic/popular). Similar to the 1133 results, students are more likely to be specific about non-academic audiences.

Features Discussed

For the essays with an identified audience (n=105), students discussed the following features:

1. Content	87 (83%)
2. Organization and/or Format	42 (40%)
3. Source use	36 (34%)
4. Tone/Style	58 (55%)
5. Length	6 (5.5%)
6. Other (4=method, 1=rhetoric)	17 (16%)

These levels of discussion are fairly consistent with last year's findings. Given the course goals for 1122, it is expected that students will articulate their audiences and choices based on those rhetorical situations, so these results are stronger than those for 1133. We could still encourage all students to clearly identify and discuss their audience for both evidence essays.

Matters for Discussion in the Fall

Based on our scoring, coding, and discussions, the assessment team would like to address several issues and questions with the rest of the faculty.

WRIT 1133

Should all evidence essays in the portfolio be from 1133?

It seems that, especially for the Reflective prompt, there is no need for papers from other classes. We can deal with oddities on an individual basis. There could be concern about selection, especially for faculty who teach fewer formal assignments, so we might want to clarify that "pieces of writing" don't have to be the big formal projects.

For the Reflective prompt, how can we emphasize that students should discuss what they learned IN RELATION to the COURSE GOALS?

Should we cut out the "you may also discuss process" clause, or at least make sure it can't be interpreted as an either/or.

How important is it for students to name the research traditions and locate their work within them, rather than just using the methods?

It was fairly common for students to mention conducting an interview or survey, for example, but never use the terms qualitative or quantitative. It is very rare for students to discuss the affordances, constraints, or epistemologies associated with their research methods.

*Do we need to consider the "writing **in**" language for two traditions?*

What are the distinctions between writing in/writing about/using? We might also want to clarify that working with data sets is appropriate; students don't have to generate original data. Likewise, some proposal assignments (without students actually conducting research) demonstrated understanding of methods. This gets into the analysis/production debate again.

It would be useful to have a fall meeting about working with existing data sets, as well as options for non-survey quantitative work, such as count observations and (non-human) experiments.

What can we do to improve articulation of audience?

Scores actually got worse on this, largely because there still isn't much mention of audience in the portfolio intros. In particular, students are not identifying academic audiences

(perhaps because they see it as default or as self-evident). Another issue noted is that students will mention repurposing an academic project for a non-academic audience, but they often don't REALLY repurpose. They may add pictures/columns and change the intro, for example, but large sections remain unchanged. Do we need to bring 'difference' back into the prompt—maybe as an added clause regarding changes/choices?

What would happen if we mixed up the order of goals in the portfolio prompt?

It seems that one possibility for lower scores on certain goals is that students run out of time/space/patience, and thus often develop one or two goal discussions, but not all three.

There's also the fact that, because we deal with audience quite a bit in 1122, our students and we pay more attention to new learning, like the research methods.

How can we foster more effective source use and students' articulation of source use strategies?

It would be a useful fall project for someone to pull together previous Syllabus studies (from Rebekah, April, and Kara) and review final syllabi with assignments to see how faculty assign and discuss source use. How many assignments require published sources? How do we treat academic and popular sources? Likewise, we could conduct a survey of how we teach citations and share useful strategies, tools, and resources.

We might share passages from higher-scoring portfolios where students tend to discuss their source use effectively, such as in representing their lit reviews and annotated bibliographies. (We also suggest that annotated bibs include evaluations of research credibility in addition to content summaries.)

1122

Why do so many portfolio introductions still lack clear articulations of rhetorical situations? Can we start including a checklist or something? Of course, this may open a larger discussion about the tyranny of the rhetorical situation and how we all conceive of audience.

What do we mean by analysis?

We might want to discuss the importance, especially for those essays responding to prompt A, of RHETORICAL analysis, and not just a close reading or visual analysis. We don't want to enforce any specific rhetorical frameworks, but there is a difference between audience-focused rhetorical analysis and the more literary or aesthetic formalist analyses that students may default to based on their high school experiences.

In multiple program meetings, discussed results; brought in sample portfolios of varying quality for faculty to read and discuss.

Failure to address rhetorical goals may be due to wording of prompt, and we suggest tightening the prompt language.

Revision: **The third piece of writing** should be a short Introductory essay that explains the first two. For each piece: 1) briefly describe the assignment (after all, most of your readers won't be familiar with your course); 2) explain the rhetorical situation for your work; and 3) discuss elements of your writing that illustrate your ability to analyze rhetorical strategies, to produce rhetorically effective texts, or both.

Faculty can encourage students to select the most appropriate evidence essays and address their rhetorical analysis and strategies with more specificity.