Study of Written Communication  
(GenEd. Outcome #1)

Truman College Assessment Committee  
Report: Fall 2015  
Study: Spring 2015
In the Spring of 2015, the Truman College Assessment Committee conducted a study to examine the writing abilities of Truman credit students.

Methodology

- Thirteen Spring 2015 courses were randomly sampled.
- Instructors in sampled courses submitted written artifacts from one class assignment.
- Full-time and part-time faculty members and administrators evaluated 176 student artifacts on seven criteria (slide 5).
- Each artifact was graded independently by two readers.
- A demographic comparison with the entire student body shows that the sample was largely representative.
Study of Written Communication: Key Findings

Average Score for Each Criterion (out of three possible points: 10, 5, 0)

- Statement of Purpose: 4.6
- Structure: 4.5
- Support: 4.3
- Style and Tone: 4.2
- Conventions for Writing: 4.0
- *Visual Information: 3.1
- Conclusion: 3.7

Average Score by Race / Ethnicity

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

Average Score by GPA

Summary of Key Findings

- The average score was slightly below 5 (“Meets Expectations”) out of three possible scores: 10, 5, 0.
- The average scores indicate that White students scored higher than Asian, Black and Hispanic students.
- Students with higher GPAs received higher scores on the assessment.
- The gap between high-GPA students and other students was especially wide on the “Conventions for Writing” criterion. White students also had significantly higher scores for this criterion.
- *Visual Information: this line item was included to highlight different elements of written communication; however, few student written assignments contained visual information as an assignment expectation.
Reader Survey: Improving Student Writing Across Truman College

Immediately following the two-day Study of Written Communication, all faculty readers (n=17) answered, anonymously, the following four questions:

1. What impresses or surprises you about the writing/assignments you have been reading?
2. What recommendations or ideas do you have based on the writings/assignments you have been reading?
3. What thoughts or concerns do you have about Truman’s GenEd. Outcome #1 (above) or the rubric used for assessment?
4. How might your own approaches to writing assignments in your classes change/improve because of this GenEd. Assessment exercise?

Reader responses were compiled and reviewed by an Assessment Committee Working Group in Fall 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The types of writing assignments at Truman are varied</td>
<td>• Disciplines should showcase and share student essays, lab reports, reflection paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Our assignment instructions and directions are not always clear or thoroughly stated</td>
<td>• Faculty PD is needed to improve our assignment instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The grading criteria (rubric) is not always clear from assignment instructions</td>
<td>• Truman should hold discipline-specific rubric workshops and discussions at in-service days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading and writing are an integral part of every discipline, and each faculty member must attend to these skills</td>
<td>• Truman’s academic support centers should host discipline-specific faculty PD and student workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing assignments were sampled from the following disciplines:

- Automotive Technology
- Biology
- Business
- Chemistry
- Child Development
- English
- Fine Arts
- College Success
- Psychology
- Religion
- Sociology

“Outside of an assessment activity, the experience of reviewing student assignments from subjects that I don’t teach is tremendously valuable. I’m going to teach differently and improve my assignments as a result.”

- Anonymous Truman Faculty Member
# Instrument for Study of Written Communication

Updated: 12.04.2014  
Communicates Effectively in Written Formats (General Education Outcome #1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
<th>Meets Expectations</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>• Exhibits a strong statement of purpose</td>
<td>• Exhibits a clear statement of purpose</td>
<td>• Does not exhibit a clear statement of purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Structure | • Effectively employs complex/original organizational structure  
• Expresses transitions with explicitness and sophistication | • Organizes logically and clearly  
• Includes clear transitions | • Digresses from statement of purpose or fails to organize logically  
• Lacks clear transitions |
| Support (data, examples, quotations, and/or citations, as appropriate to discipline) | • Supports claims thoroughly  
• Incorporates sources insightfully  
• Employs sound logic (no fallacies)  
• Anticipates and responds to audience’s counter arguments, if appropriate | • Supports claims adequately  
• Incorporates sources adequately  
• Employs adequate logic (minimal fallacies)  
• Adequately anticipates and responds to audience’s counter arguments, if appropriate | • Lacks adequate support for claims  
• Lacks sources or adequate explanation of sources  
• Employs poor logic  
• Inadequately anticipates and responds to audience’s counter arguments, if appropriate |
| Style and Tone | • Demonstrates sophistication of tone, word choice, and sentence structure | • Demonstrates appropriate tone, word choice, and sentence structure | • Demonstrates inadequate tone, word choice, and sentence structure |
| Conventions for Writing (grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and mechanics) | • Includes no or almost no surface errors | • Includes few surface errors that may interfere with comprehension | • Includes frequent or persistent surface errors, interfering with comprehension |
| Visual Information (when visual elements are present) | • Appropriately creates, selects, and interprets visual information | • Adequately creates, selects, and interprets visual information | • Inadequately creates, selects, and interprets visual information |
| Conclusion | • Concludes effectively | • Concludes adequately | • Lacks adequate conclusion |
A Note of Thanks: The Assessment Committee would like to thank the sampled faculty who submitted student written artifacts and the faculty as well as the administrative readers (listed above) who participated in the two-day study. Finally, thank you to our administration for providing funding to support this assessment initiative that seeks to better understand—and to improve—student learning at Truman.