Writing Assessment Report
2014-2017

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A. INTRODUCTION

A1. Background. For the 2008-2011 University Learning Objectives (ULO) writing assessment project, readers scored a total of 217 essays during three different sessions divided by class level: 100-level A1 and A3 classes; 300-level C4 and D5 classes; and senior-level classes. The results of that 2008-2011 universitywide writing assessment cycle revealed that newly admitted students’ writing skills developed significantly during their first year on campus; however, beyond the first year, “sophomores, juniors, and seniors exhibited statistically equivalent levels of attainment across all traits.” Based on those assessment results, the previous writing assessment committee proposed a set of recommendations in order to “ensure that all Cal Poly juniors and seniors continue to improve their writing skills.” The committee also emphasized the need to “align learning experiences so that General Education (GE), the Graduate Writing Requirement and the senior project form a coordinated assessment of writing skills at the beginning, developing and mastery levels.”

A2. Summary. The 2014-2017 universitywide writing assessment project plan draws upon elements of the previous assessment cycle and includes features developed during and after the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Retreat on Core Competencies: Written and Oral Communication. At the WASC Retreat (November 13-14, 2014), Brenda Helmbrecht, Dawn Janke and Matt Luskey attended workshops, participated in planning sessions, and consulted with Kathleen Yancey, a renowned expert on writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines (WAC/WID) pedagogy and assessment. The WASC Retreat team recommended that institutions develop an assessment model that is “customizable and includes multiple methods and approaches that can be gradually implemented;” this assessment therefore entails two instances of direct writing assessment: one at the upper-division GE level, which mirrors the assessment method conducted in the previous cycle, and another at the department level, which is a new approach that can be gradually implemented by all departments over time.

The overarching goal of this assessment cycle is to articulate a pathway for universitywide writing assessment that yields valid and reliable data that can be used to enhance the learning experience for students and that fosters meaningful professional development for faculty across the university, especially those who teach writing-intensive courses in GE and/or major programs. The 2014-2017 writing assessment project, coordinated across grade levels, sought to articulate the various ways that students develop as writers while at Cal Poly thereby serving as the first step in the establishment of writing benchmarks on campus.

A3. Objectives. The 2014-2017 writing assessment project sought to provide the following:

• Artifacts and findings to serve in comparison with 2008-2011 upper-division GE writing proficiency assessment results;
• Further demonstration of the differences students demonstrate in writing skills at more advanced stages of their degree progress.
• Evidence to support the development of writing proficiency benchmarks at the upper division;
• A step towards program-specific, senior-level writing assessment support.

This writing assessment project was two-tiered in approach: 1) Written artifacts from upper-division, writing-intensive GE Area C4 and D5 courses were collected in spring of 2015 and assessed in June of 2015; 2) Written artifacts from senior-level capstone courses in Biological Sciences and Liberal Studies were collected and assessed in collaboration with department members in AY 15-16. While any attempt to benchmark student writing proficiency on campus should begin with first year writing, because there was evidence from the previous writing assessment cycle that students made progress toward improved proficiency levels from the first to second year, the 2014-2017 assessment plan rationalized that it was imperative to assess upper-division student writing from GE classes, the results of which could be compared to the results from the 2008-2011 first-year writing assessment.

Upper-division, Writing-intensive GE Courses. As with the previous assessment cycle, direct assessment of student writing involved the gathering and scoring of student essays from a convenience sample of GE courses designated as writing-intensive. To ensure inter-rater reliability, a norming session was conducted at the outset of the scoring session, followed by a scoring session with two readers per sample. A third reader, one of the assessment co-chairs, scored traits for which the initial two readers varied by two or more points during assessment.

Senior-level, Program-specific Courses. Along with the scoring of the upper-division, writing-intensive GE Area C4 and D5 essays, direct assessment of student writing occurred at the senior level in Biological Sciences and Liberal Studies. The assessment of these artifacts utilized a course-embedded assessment model, which involved the participation of program faculty who: 1) identified an assignment from a senior-level course that requires students to “demonstrate skills and abilities most characteristic of those that writers should possess in their major” (Zawacki); 2) gathered and selected samples from the identified assignments; 3) read a few samples and described the discipline-specific performance levels for traits and criteria identified in the University Learning Objectives (ULO) Expository Writing Rubric; 4) developed a rubric that used the ULO criteria/traits, but was discipline-specific in its performance descriptions; 5) scored artifacts using the customized rubric. The course-embedded model for assessing senior-level, discipline-specific writing was informed by WAC/WID practices – particularly genre and activity theory – which acknowledge that writing is situated and that there are often “significant disagreements among faculty across and in the disciplines about what constitutes competent writing” (Zawacki). The format produced rubrics and scores useful for benchmarking of student writing in the major and occasioned rich opportunities for faculty professional development.1

1 This approach to assessment is borrowed from the University of Minnesota Writing Enriched Curriculum model, in which departments across the curriculum are invited to craft program-
In sum, Table 1 below provides an overview of methods of this writing assessment project.

Table 1. Overview of Writing Assessment Project Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower-Division</th>
<th>Upper-Division General Education</th>
<th>Senior-Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use results from 2008-2011 writing assessment cycle as a point of comparison.</td>
<td>Collect essays written for C4 and D5 courses identified as writing-intensive. Assess a sample of those essays using the University Expository Writing Rubric.</td>
<td>Collect and assess senior projects/capstone projects using department-designed versions of the University Expository Writing Rubric. Pilot at a small scale with two programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. UPPER-DIVISION, WRITING-INTENSIVE GE COURSES

B1. Method. In order to meet the objectives of the 2014-2017 upper-division General Education (GE) writing assessment project, two emails were sent: one at the end of winter quarter on March 17, 2015, and another in spring quarter, on April 15, 2015, to solicit participation from instructors teaching spring quarter upper-division, writing-intensive GE Arts and Humanities Area C4 and Society and the Individual Area D5 classes (see Appendix A for a copy of the email). In all, 41 C4 instructors teaching a total of 68 sections, and 23 D5 instructors teaching a total of 33 sections received the email. Of the 64 instructors who received the email, 10 instructors agreed to collect and submit student work.²

Close to 400 essays from 10 upper-division, writing-intensive GE courses were collected in spring of 2015 (2154). In addition, Brenda Helmbrecht submitted student writing she collected during winter quarter (2152). In order to reduce bias when selecting samples from each class, the artifacts were selected by ordering the class lists alphabetically and then selecting every third paper. In the event that the third essay from the roster was not available, the subsequent essay was selected. In all, 135 essays were selected to be scored from the 11 courses whose specific writing plans that “define and characterize writing in the specific discipline; name writing abilities with which students should be proficient; map abilities into undergraduate curricula; plan for relevant writing assessment and support.”²

It is important to note that some instructors responded indicating that they would not be assigning essays in their GE writing-intensive courses, most notably those who teach large lecture courses such as Humanities 320, Philosophy 340 and Political Science 325. As well, five sections of C4 classes are fiction and poetry writing classes, and the writing assignments in those classes were not relevant to our assessment goals. Finally, one C4 class (Spanish 305) assigns writing in Spanish, which also was not applicable to the study.
instructors submitted student work. Table 2, Course Information provides further details about the courses included in this writing assessment project.

Table 2. Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA C4</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HABIB, KENNETH</td>
<td>Music 324: Music and Society</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HELMBRECHT, BRENDA</td>
<td>English 371: Film Styles and Genres</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JENKINS, RYAN</td>
<td>Philosophy 322: Philosophy of Technology</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KANN, DAVID</td>
<td>English 380: Literary Themes</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KAUFFMANN, KRISTA</td>
<td>English 335: British Literature in the Age of Modernism, 1914-Present</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VALLE, PHILIP</td>
<td>Theatre 390: Global Theatre and Performance</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL C4 ENROLLMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA D5</th>
<th>INSTRUCTOR</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>ENROLLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BODEMER, MARGARET</td>
<td>Ethnic Studies 330: The Chinese American Experience</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BODEMER, MARGARET</td>
<td>History 319: Modern South and Southeast Asia</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BURGUNDER, LEE</td>
<td>Business 311: Managing Technology in the International Legal Environment</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEHR, JANE</td>
<td>Ethnic Studies 351: Gender, Race, Class, Nation in Global Engineering, Technology, and International Development</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PARENT, ROBIN</td>
<td>Women and Gender Studies 320: Women in Global Perspective</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL AREA D5 ENROLLMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL ENROLLMENT |                   |                                             | 392        |

On June 23, 2015, 23 faculty and staff from across campus met in the library, Room 111H, to assess the essays. (See Appendix C for the reader invitation letter and reader list.) At the outset of the scoring session, the readers were normed using students essays from Ethnic Studies 351, Business 311, and English 371 pre-selected by the assessment co-chairs, Janke and Luskey. First, readers received the University Expository Writing Rubric (See Appendix D) and a sample essay
from English 371 along with pre-determined scores for the essay. After the readers reviewed the essays and scores, the group engaged in discussion about the criteria and standards. The group then was given another essay from English 371 and asked to score it on their own, after which the group shared their results and determined how closely their assessments aligned. Another essay was then provided to the group, but the essay was from Ethnic Studies 351. The assessment co-chairs discussed briefly the course assignment and asked the group to score the essay using the rubric. The same approach was implement for a third essay from Business 311, and after the group scored the essays, results were shared to determine how well the room was normed to ensure inter-rater reliability. The assessment leaders then addressed questions and explained how the day would unfold. Readers were then provided with a stack of essays to assess, with all identifying information removed from each essay.

During the scoring session, each essay was scored by two readers using the 0-4 point University Expository Writing Rubric, which assesses the following five traits: Purpose, Synthesis, Support, Style, and Mechanics. At the culmination of the scoring session, readers were invited to share insights (see Appendix E for a summary of their comments). Scores were tallied manually, and a third reader (either Janke or Luskey) re-evaluated essays with two or more dimensions that had a scoring discrepancy of two or more points. In all instances, an essay’s two less discrepant scores then were summed, which resulted in scores on a 0-8 point scale (with very few zeros assigned during scoring).

**B.2. Results.** Of the 13 class sections from which essays were collected and selected, scores were omitted from essays labeled “J” and “JJ,” which were from Ryan Jenkins’ philosophy course. The writing assessment project co-directors anticipated omitting the scores because Jenkins’ writing assignment was unique and therefore might prove difficult to assess with the standard rubric as his assignment consisted of short answers to a series of questions. The assessment co-chairs included the artifacts in the scoring session as an experiment to determine whether or not the University Expository Writing Rubric would be applicable to such a task; however, the scorers were not able to norm and effectively assess the artifacts. This left 116 essays for analysis. See Table 3 for a breakdown of essays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Essay Label</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Essay Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIST 319 Essay B</td>
<td>7 students</td>
<td>B3, B6, B9, B12, B15, B18, B21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 319 Essay BB</td>
<td>7 students</td>
<td>BB3, BB6, BB9, BB13, BB15, BB18, BB21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES 330 Essay C</td>
<td>11 students</td>
<td>C3, C6, C9, C12, C15, C18, C21, C24, C27, C30, C33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 335</td>
<td>8 students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data from an ad hoc report post assessment was collected, in which the student identification number (Empl ID) associated with each essay was collected for the following categories: Gender; Underrepresented minority (URM); First Generation; Pell Grant Eligibility; Grade Point Average (GPA); Major; Advanced Placement (AP) credit in lieu of English 134: Writing & Rhetoric; Remediation Milestone Requirement Status; International Status; Completion of English 133: Writing & Rhetoric for English as Second Language Students, English 145: Reasoning, Argumentation and Writing, or English 149: Technical Writing for Engineers; and Admit Type and Level. The report revealed that most essays scored were from students in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) and the College of Liberal Arts (CLA), with the lowest representation from the College of Architecture and Environmental Design (CAED). A total of 16 of the 116 students were classified as first generation or Pell eligible (and the two were not equivalent—meaning the first generation marker did not always result in Pell eligibility). See Figures 1 and 2 and Table 4 for more information on the student characteristics of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E3, E6, E9, E12, E18, E21, E24, E27</td>
<td>ENGL 335</td>
<td>9 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE3, EE6, EE9, EE12, EE15, EE18, EE21, EE24, EE27</td>
<td>ENGL 371</td>
<td>10 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1, K3, K12, K16, K19, K22, K24, K26</td>
<td>ENGL 380</td>
<td>8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3, L6, L9, L12, L17</td>
<td>ES 351</td>
<td>5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL3, LL6, LL9, LL12, LL15</td>
<td>ES 351</td>
<td>5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3, M7, M9, M12, M15, M18, M21, M25</td>
<td>MU 324</td>
<td>8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3, P6, P9, P12, P15, P18, P21, P24, P27, P30, P33</td>
<td>WGS 320</td>
<td>11 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3, T6, T9, T12, T15, T18, T21, T24, T28, T30, T33</td>
<td>BUS 311</td>
<td>11 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT3, TT6, TT9, TT12, TT15, TT18, TT21, TT24</td>
<td>BUS 311 Essay TT</td>
<td>8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3, V7, V9, V12, V16, V18, V22, V24</td>
<td>TH 390</td>
<td>8 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Gender Representation of Student Sample

Gender Representation (n = 116)

- Male Students: 52 (45%)
- Female Students: 64 (55%)

Figure 2. Primary College Affiliation of Student Sample

Primary College Affiliation (n=116)

- CAFES: 26 (22.4%)
- CENG: 17 (14.7%)
- CSM: 15 (12.9%)
- CLA: 37 (31.9%)
- OCOB: 17 (14.7%)
- CAED: 4 (3.5%)
Table 4. Characteristics of Student Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>URM</th>
<th>First Generation (Parents with no college education)</th>
<th>First Generation (Parents with no college degree)</th>
<th>Pell Eligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The 16 students with the URM designation are not the same 16 students with the Pell Eligible designation.

After the writing assessment project co-chairs resolved 26 essays with score discrepancies of two or more in multiple traits, 85 essays (73.3%) had a discrepancy of at most one point (often on multiple traits). When the score on one trait of an essay had a discrepancy of 2 or more (31 students), that individual trait was dropped from further analysis. Notably, most of the disagreements that involved the largest spread in scores were evident in the Support trait. See Table 5 for a more detailed account of traits and differences in scores.

Table 5. Trait Discrepancy Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No discrepancies</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancy of one</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancy of two or more</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Discrepancies</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On each trait, the median score was 5 (the sum of 2 and 3, as 2-point discrepancies were not included in the analysis). Table 6, below, provides the descriptive statistics including the average score on a trait, the median score, and the modal score for each trait.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAIT</th>
<th>Number of Essays Analyzed</th>
<th>Number of Essays Dropped from Trait Analysis</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3, below, shows the frequencies of scores on each trait. The numbers on the horizontal axis represent scores added by two readers.
The means are largest in Purpose and Mechanics, lowest in Synthesis and Style. (A multiple comparisons procedure reflecting the paired nature of the data identified the Purpose and Mechanics trait averages as significantly larger than the Synthesis and Style trait averages.) It is important to note, however, that these differences are small (less than 0.5) in comparison to the variability in rater scores.

Below, the distributions of the scores for each trait are examined disaggregated by the URM code. Keep in mind the small number of underrepresented minorities in our data set. Table 7 categorizes the performances as median or higher versus below the median.

Table 7. Performance by Median

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait &amp; Score</th>
<th>URM, Number</th>
<th>URM, Percentage</th>
<th>Not an URM, Number</th>
<th>Not an URM, Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose &lt;5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose &gt;5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis &lt;5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis &gt;5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Fewer than Median</td>
<td>Fewer than Median</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Greater than Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support &lt;5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support &gt;5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style &lt;5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style &gt;5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics &lt;5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics &gt;5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results, there is some evidence that underrepresented minorities are more likely to score below the median than other students.

Preliminary statistical analysis of the results, adjusting for the individual students, suggests that the most useful predictors of writing achievement are GPA and URM, as revealed in the following traits:

- Purpose: URM
- Synthesis: GPA, URM
- Support: GPA, URM, Gender, Pell eligibility
- Style: GPA, URM, First Gen (with parents who have no-college education)
- Mechanics: GPA, URM

Because URM is a useful predictor of writing achievement in all traits, the following graphs compare performance of underrepresented minority students and their better represented peers for each trait. Note: just 13-16 students were flagged as URM = yes on the results of the Ad Hoc Data Report.
Figure 4. Performance of URM and non-URM Students on Purpose Trait

Figure 5. Performance of URM and non-URM Students on Synthesis Trait
Figure 6. Performance of URM and non-URM Students on Support Trait

Scores on Support Trait

Scores on Style Trait

Figure 7. Performance of URM and non-URM Students on Style Trait
As well, because Pell eligibility was a useful predictor of writing achievement in the Support trait, the chart below compares performance of Pell eligible students and their ineligible peers.

Figure 8. Performance of URM and non-URM Students on Mechanics Trait

Figure 9. Performance of Pell Eligible and Ineligible Students on Support Trait
Finally, first generation students whose parents had no college education was a useful predictor of writing achievement in the Style trait. Figure 10, below, compares performance on the Style trait of first generation students with their peers whose parents have a college education.

Figure 10. Performance of First Generation Students and their Peers on Style Trait

In future writing assessment analyses, interactions among student characteristics could be explored. For example, two interactions that were almost significant (p-value ≈ 0.10) were between the GPA and URM flag for the Synthesis and Mechanics traits (see Figures 11 and 12).
Figure 11. *Relationship between Purpose and GPA for URM and non-URM students*

Figure 12. *Relationship between Mechanics and GPA for URM and non-URM students*
Interestingly, the largest difference between URM and non-URM students on the Synthesis trait occurs for the students with lower GPAs and the largest difference between the URM and non-URM students on the Mechanics trait occurs for the students with larger GPAs. This is largely driven by only three URM students with GPA > 3.5, one who is missing a score for the Mechanics trait.

**B.3. Comparisons to the 2008-2011 assessment cycle.** The 2008 cycle distinguished lower division and upper division students. In that analysis, the two reader scores were averaged (using the 0 to 4 scale). Table 8 shows the overall mean scores for juniors and seniors combined during the 2008-2011 cycle.

Table 8. *Students’ Overall Mean Scores, 08-11*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Score &lt; 2</th>
<th>2 &lt; score &lt; 3</th>
<th>3 &lt; score &lt; 4</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>35 (23.4%)</td>
<td>90 (60.4%)</td>
<td>17 (11.4%)</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Replicating that method, summing the five traits together and dividing by five, Table 9 presents the 2014-2017 mean scores for all students, with which one can cautiously compare results between the two cycles. These comparisons may be made because essays were assessed using the same rubric. Notably, in both cycles students’ averaged between a score of 2 and 3.

Table 9. *Students’ Overall Mean Scores, 14-17*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Score &lt; 2</th>
<th>2 &lt; score &lt; 3</th>
<th>3 &lt; score &lt; 4</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14 (16.5%)</td>
<td>51 (60.0%)</td>
<td>20 (23.5%)</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 and Table 11 present student attainment disaggregated by trait. For each trait, the tables reveal the percentage of students with a score of 2 or better, and the mean score for each trait.

Table 10. *Percentage of Participants Scoring at Least a 2 by Trait, 08-11*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 2</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. *Percentage of Participants Scoring or at least a 2 by trait, 14-17*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2</td>
<td>70 (64%)</td>
<td>58 (51.8%)</td>
<td>62 (58.5%)</td>
<td>63 (56.3%)</td>
<td>85 (77.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 2</td>
<td>89 (81.7%)</td>
<td>93 (83.0%)</td>
<td>91 (85.9%)</td>
<td>96 (85.7%)</td>
<td>98 (89.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The difference between the first two rows is the number of students who averaged a 2 score.

Note: The assessment co-chairs also hoped to examine the 2008-2011 assessment data disaggregated similarly by gender, URM, Pell, etc. to determine, albeit cautiously, if there were any similarities in performance rates by particular subgroups of the sample population, but the data in that cycle was not connected to students’ identification numbers (Empl IDs). It would take some time to work on that, so for now that information is not included in this report.

C. SENIOR-LEVEL, PROGRAM-SPECIFIC WRITING COURSES

C.1. Method. An email was sent to department heads and chairs (see Appendix F), to which 11 responded expressing interest in the project. Those interested were as follows: Rebekah Oulton, Civil and Environmental Engineering; Marie Yeung, Biological Sciences; Lola Berber-Jimenez and Tanya Flushman, Liberal Studies; Michael Haungs and David Gillette, Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies; Peggy Rice, Chemistry and Biochemistry; Scott Steinmaus, Horticulture and Crop Science; Gour Choudhury and Arlene Grant Holcomb, Nutrition; Keri Schwab, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration; Cesar Bustamante, Landscape Architecture; Heather Starnes, Kinesiology; and Gregg Fiegel and Yarrow Nelson, Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Given the resources, only two programs were selected to pilot this component of the writing assessment project. Marie Yeung in Biological Sciences was selected to assess Biology 461: Senior Project – Research Proposal and Lola Berber-Jimenez and Tanya Flushman in Liberal Studies were selected to assess Education 428. These two courses were selected in part because they expressed interest before others and also because (a) they had colleague buy-in for participation and (b) their writing assignments seemed to fit the purposes of the study. In both instances, Luskey and Janke first met with course instructors to discuss expectations of the specific writing assignments to be used for this assessment (see Appendix H and J for assignments).

The assessment co-chairs then scheduled meetings with the instructor and other department members who reviewed sample essays, discussed expectations for the assignments, and brainstormed language to use in the creation of a course-specific writing rubric. Traits from the University Expository Writing Rubric were used, and faculty crafted unique descriptions for each trait based on discipline conventions as well as program and course learning objectives. As the faculty members shared ideas, Janke transcribed the session, and Luskey attempted to capture descriptions for the rubrics. After the rubric design meeting ended, Janke and Luskey then met to create the rubrics based on faculty member comments, and then shared the rubric with faculty for feedback. The feedback and revision process generally took two weeks, during which participants went back and forth with updated iterations. See Appendix I and K for final rubrics.
Three essays from each assignment were selected to serve as exemplars for the norming portion of the respective scoring session, which was scheduled after the rubric was established. Course instructors were asked to solicit fellow department members to assist in the assessment process. For the Biology 461 assessment session, three faculty members scored 11 essays: Marie Yeung, Amy Howes, and Alejandra Yep, all of whom had taught or were/would be teaching Biology 461. A total of seven faculty members scored 14 essays for Education 428: Lola Berber-Jimenez, Tanya Flushman, Russell Swanagon, Anne Marie Bergen, Kellie Green Hall, Longetta LaRose, and Chance Hoellwarth. Norming of the essays followed the same method as the norming for assessment of essays from upper-division, writing-intensive GE courses (see pp. 8-9).

Unlike the GE portion of this assessment project, the co-chairs did not connect assessed essays to student identification numbers (Empl IDs) in order to sort performance by subgroups, but the results below show performance by trait in an effort to compare the results with student performance by trait in GE courses. Note that the scoring presented in the Results sections of Senior-level, program-specific writing courses is different than the scoring presented in the upper-division, WI GE assessment. Scoring in this segment of the assessment project was added together and averaged.

**C.2. Results. Biological Sciences.** Three readers scored 11 essays from Biology 461: seven essays were scored twice and four essays were scored three times. The table below shows the average essay score by trait.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Traits scored =130
Trait scores within one point of each other = .88 (very high reliability)
Essays with a discrepancy of 6 total points or more = 1 out of 11 = .09

Traits with the highest to lowest discrepancies:
- Purpose (2 out of 11 essays)
- Synthesis (2 out of 11 essays)
- Support (1 out of 11 essays)
- Style (1 out of 11 essays)
- Mechanics (1 out of 11 essays)

The table below depicts the average scores assigned by each reader per trait.
Table 13. *Biology 461 Score Results by Reader and Trait*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose (1.7)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis (1.8)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (1.8)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style (2.1)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics (2.5)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C. 3. Results. Liberal Studies.** 38 student papers were collected from Education 428; six readers scored 14 essays—each essay was scored twice. Table 15, below, shows the average essay score by trait.

Table 14. *Education 428 Average Scores by Trait*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw Averages</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Traits scored = 140

Trait scores within one point of each other = .76

Essays with a discrepancy of 6 total points or more = 7 out of 14 = .50

Traits with the highest to lowest discrepancies:
- Style (7 out of 14 essays)
- Mechanics (5 out of 14 essays)
- Synthesis (3 out of 14 essays)
- Support (1 out of 14 essays)
- Purpose (none)

Notably, there were no discrepancies in the Purpose category, which is likely due to the highly scripted assignment. Most discrepancies were in the Style and Mechanics traits. The essays with the three highest discrepancies (Essays 7A, 12A, and 16A) had the same two readers, Swanagon and Hall. Re-examining those three essays as a group might help faculty identify where/how they need to align in their expectations and assessment of student writing.

After the scoring session, Luskey and Janke met with the Liberal Studies Student Matters
Committee to share the initial results. Flushman also made significant changes to another section of the course: she encouraged her students to use the Writing & Rhetoric Center prior to submitting final papers, she clarified the writing assignment, and she then customized the rubric to grade student artifacts from another section of Education 428. Of those, ten essays were selected for a second round of assessment. Table 15, below, offers a comparison of the results. It is interesting that the second round of assessment resulted in improved scores in each trait. This may be a consequence of the changes Flushman made to the assignment and/or students’ use of the Writing & Rhetoric Center prior to submission.

Table 15. *Education 428 Comparison of Average Scores by Trait for Both Scoring Sessions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Leading up to the findings of this writing assessment cycle, based on the previous assessment results, the university had established that “sophomores, juniors, and seniors exhibited statistically equivalent levels of attainment across all traits.” Without having new lower-division artifacts to which to compare, this assessment cycle intended to examine if junior and senior level writing displayed similar results as those in the previous cycle. It is clear that juniors and senior continue to exhibit the same level of attainment they exhibited previously, with 60.0% earning a score between average attainment (2) and good attainment (3) in this cycle in comparison to the 60.4% who scored in that same range during the 2008-11 cycle.

Generally, the 2014-17 writing assessment cycle appears to suggest that in upper-division, writing-intensive GE courses, student achievement remains steady at average attainment. While the sample size for this assessment cycle is small, it is important to examine what, if any, progression student writers are making from the first year to their senior level. Despite the sample size, given that this is the second round of writing assessed following similar methods and rubrics, it is evident that upper-division students are not performing better than their lower-division peers. Based on these findings, the university now may consider setting the benchmark of writing proficiency of upper-division writers to an average between good (3) and superior (4) attainment, with seniors writing in the majors averaging scores that more solidly represent superior (4) attainment of writing skills.

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3 At the time of this report, the updated assignment and rubric were unavailable.
During the next writing assessment cycle, it may be helpful to submit an ad hoc request to sort student participant, using identification numbers (Empl IDs), to determine how many writing-intensive GE courses students have completed before submitting their artifact and attempt to draw conclusions on performance based on students’ writing education in addition to their population markers. The assessment co-chairs do not believe any conclusions can be made about writing proficiency levels across the six colleges using data from the 2014-17 cycle given that representation weighted toward the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences and College of Liberal Arts students, and senior-level data solely represents the College of Science and Mathematics. In other words, this sample was not large enough to develop any generalizations across the colleges.

Notably, the upper-division GE assessment results during this cycle revealed the most discrepancies in Support and Synthesis, whereas the Biology 461 results indicated the greatest discrepancies in the Purpose and Synthesis categories, and Education 428 results yielded the greatest discrepancies in the Style and Mechanics categories. It is possible that since readers of upper-division, writing-intensive GE assessments represented disciplines across campus, their understanding of what counts as a particular level of attainment in Synthesis and Support varied. One would think that the norming session would have calibrated for alignment given the time spent discussing exemplars and establishing inter-rate reliability; however, it may be the case that the assignments themselves were disparate enough to (a) complicate norming and/or (b) cause the discrepancies. Nevertheless, just as readers have discrepancies about characteristics of synthesis and support, so, too, students struggle to demonstrate advanced levels of attainment in the Synthesis and Support categories. Clearly there is a gap here, one that needs to be addressed at the curricular level in order better to support the students.

There seems, as well, to be a gap in instructors’ expectations about how students should demonstrate attainment of style and mechanics. At the concluding conversation of the GE assessment session, for example, readers seemed to get hung up on mechanical errors, as reflected in the following comments: “Students often rely on a conversational tone, which is not always grammatically correct;” “How can we help students to write good, effective titles and help them not to forget to give a title;” and “Is it ‘statement.’ or ‘statement’. With the period inside or outside?” To be sure, style and mechanics are important to writing educators, but they are so for rhetorical purposes, not merely for correctness. Demonstrations of style and mechanics for correctness, however, seem to be more important in certain disciplines. The Education 428 discrepancies may suggest that faculty in the department would do well to define and align their expectations of style and mechanics, particularly given the course objectives, which include preparing students for the teacher credential program. In sum, it may be important for future writing assessment chairs to track discrepancies before they’re resolved because the lack of consensus without a third reader in certain traits may speak to readers' varied expectations associated with certain skills. Scoring partners, who continue to norm together throughout the scoring process, may improve inter-rater reliability. As well, the establishment of performance benchmarks for each writing trait might help faculty develop
better understandings of those expectations. If instructors’ expectations are in line with university-established performance benchmarks, then students’ understand and development of those benchmarks may improve moving forward.

Overall, while there seems to have been some level of improvement in performance by upper-division students in GE classes from the 2008-11 cycle to the current one, it does not appear to be the case that senior-level writers produce texts at an advanced level compared to those of first-year writers. Tying these assessment results with the university’s Graduation Writing Requirement (GWR) data, it is evident that students attain average levels of writing proficiency at best during their time on campus. For example, while an average of 73% of students earn a passing score on the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) each quarter, 77% of those passing scores are with a combined score of 8 from two readers. Students who earn an 8 on the WPE earn the lowest passing score, the score that mostly aligns between average attainment (2) and good attainment (3) on the University Learning Objectives Expository Writing Rubric. Put simply, student writing that earns a combined score of 8 on the WPE is competent but flawed. Given the high school achievement levels of our incoming students, reaching average attainment of writing skills nearing or upon graduation hardly seems sufficient. In short, the university would do well to focus its efforts on developing and implementing a more robust writing curriculum at the upper level, not only for GWR goals and to meet the objectives set forth by the CSU’s 2025 Graduation Initiative, but also for post-degree professional and civic success.

For the next writing assessment cycle, it will be important to capture performance in lower-division GE writing courses (Area A1 and A3) and continue to expand the senior-level, program-specific writing assessment work. It would be ideal to collect more student artifacts from more courses across the curriculum and to randomize samples in order to present a more authentic picture of student writing on campus. Doing so will provide the university with a comprehensive understanding of students’ levels of writing skills attainment. Also, it was the case with this cycle of assessment that results did not include self-assessment because so few essays had them. Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) and a number of postsecondary experts assert that metacognitive practices are essential to students’ full development of knowledge. In future writing assessment cycles, then, the co-chairs of this cycle recommend that a more thoughtfully developed self-assessment assignment be collected with artifacts.

The hope, as well, is that in the meantime, faculty development occurs across all levels to ensure that writing instruction occurs and writing practice is sustained over time on campus. While it is not necessary for all faculty members to utilize the University Expository Writing Rubric in their own courses, the rubric traits, and benchmarks therein, may help instructors across all levels and in all disciplines have a better understanding of the expected levels of writing achievement for Cal Poly graduates. Programs and colleges may consider adopting the rubric as a starting point for designing their own, more specific versions of the writing characteristics reflective of their disciplines.
Current campus practice of writing assessment involves a variety of methods, most often the analytic method of assigning multiple scores for specific traits, which is employed in most classes, and the holistic method of assigning one score reflective of the whole essay, which is employed for the WPE. One recommendation from the previous assessment cycle (2008-11) was to align more effectively those rubrics. Certainly a more pointed connection between the traits and characteristics in both rubrics would help the university establish and measure its writing expectations across the curriculum. Connecting traits and characteristics across all rubrics and scoring guides also will assist the university in both benchmarking and assessing for those benchmarks. Additionally, implementation of a portfolio-based assessment method that measures those traits and characteristics across all levels of students’ experiences on campus may assist the university in identifying gaps in learning that may lead to curricular and/or organizational change that may more positively impact students’ writing education and skills attainment on campus.

Finally, in the future the university ought to consider triangulating data gathered from writing assessment cycles with data from the GWR as well as from the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) findings. Doing so will help establish a more comprehensive narrative of student expectations and engagement with writing at Cal Poly.


F. Appendix
Email to Solicit Participation from Upper-division Writing-intensive C4 Instructors

Dear GE C4 Instructor,

As part of the university’s continuing WASC accreditation process, Matt Luskey from the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology and I will be leading a writing assessment project across campus. One of the goals for this project is to articulate benchmarks for writing in lower-division GE, upper-division GE, and senior-level capstone coursework.

Because you are teaching an upper-division GE course in spring, we would very much like to collaborate with you for this assessment project. If you are interested in participating, the following will be asked of you: 1) you will be asked to send us a writing assignment that you believe will work for assessment, and 2) you will be asked to collect and send us a copy of your students’ essays once they complete the assignment.

We realize that spring quarter has not yet begun, but we thought we would get a head start on the project by reaching out to you today. At this point, we would like to begin collecting assignments to make sure that the assignment will elicit the kind of argumentative/persuasive writing for which we are looking.

If you assign a 4-6-page essay in your C4 course that hits all, or even some, of the writing traits on the attached University Expository Writing Rubric, please send me the assignment so Matt and I can take a look at it. If you have questions about whether or not an assignment could work, just send it along and we can go from there.

Please know that when we read your assignment, we are looking at it through the lens of assessment. We are looking neither to determine the effectiveness of the assignment overall, nor to determine the effectiveness of your pedagogy. It’s possible that you might send us an assignment that almost hits the criteria we set, and if this is the case, we may suggest small revisions if you still want to participate in this important university-wide assessment project. But, you don’t have to revise an assignment if you don’t want to.

If your assignment fits our purposes, we will ask you to collect from your students two copies of the final essay: one for you and one for us. We also will ask that your students complete a brief reflective writer’s memo in which they discuss their writing/revising process (we will provide you with this reflection assignment so you won’t need to create it on your own).

If you agree to participate in this project, you may collect work from as few or as many of your sections as you’d like. I will say, however, that our aim is to collect as many essays from C4 classes as possible because doing so will allow us to have richer, more revealing data with which to work when attempting to benchmark writing on campus.
Everyone who collects student work for this assessment project will be invited to participate in the essay scoring session, a paid endeavor that will no doubt offer an excellent professional development opportunity. If you participate, you also will receive a note for your WPAF that explains your involvement with this project.

Feel free to contact me with any questions. Matt and I are excited to work with you—please send us your assignments!
Appendix B
Email to Provide Instruction to Assessment Participants

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for being willing to assist with writing assessment in your GE course this quarter.

Attached to this email, you will find a letter to share with your students. Please post this on your PolyLearn course site or email it to your course alias. The letter explains the purpose of our assessment and includes the writer’s memo we would like students to complete and submit with their essays.

As well, sometime next week, you will find in your department mailbox an envelope with an envelope addressed to me—if you are teaching multiple sections, you will find a separate envelope for each section. Your envelope(s) will be labeled with your course info; please make sure to put each section’s papers in the corresponding envelope.

When submitting your students’ work, please include in the envelope(s) the following:
• The assignment sheet
• Student essays
• Students’ writer’s memos

Also, please make sure your students’ papers are free of any margin comments, end comments, and grades. In addition, please leave the students’ names on the essays so we can track demographics (major, class-level, etc.). I will remove all identifying information (for both students and instructors) before we score the student work.

If you prefer not to use campus mail to submit student work via the provided envelopes, I am more than happy to pick up materials from you at your convenience. As well, if students submit work to you electronically, please let me know if you have added me to your PolyLearn course or if I can provide with you a CD-Rom or USB key for transmission; you can also email the essays to me as Word attachments.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns, and thank you so much for being willing to have your students participate in writing assessment this quarter. We could not complete this important project without your collaboration.
Appendix C
Email to Solicit Readers to Participate in the Scoring Session

Dear Colleague,

As part of the university’s WASC accreditation, Matt Luskey from the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology and I are leading a writing assessment project across campus. One of the goals for this project is to articulate writing benchmarks for upper-division GE, for which we will be hosting an assessment session on Tuesday, June 23, 2015.

On behalf of Academic Programs and Planning, I am writing today to invite you to serve as a reader for this upcoming session.

On June 23, readers will meet in the library, Room 111, to engage in student essays from across C4 and D5 courses. Continental breakfast will be served at 8:00 am with the norming of essay scoring to take place between 8:30 am and 10:00 am. From 10:00 am to 2:30 pm, readers will assess GE C4 and D5 essays using the provided rubric, and we will engage in a whole-group conversation from 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm, during which we will discuss any observed student writing trends and patterns.

You will receive a $200 honorarium for your participation in this project. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

We hope that you will consider joining us on June 23. Please reply to this email, and let me know if you are willing to serve as a reader for our upcoming upper-division writing assessment session.

READERS
Elizabeth Adan        Lauren Kolodziejski
Margaret Bodemer     Josh Machamer
Ellen Burke          Tim Markowitz
Kaila Bussert        Beth Merritt Miller
Steve Davis          Jose Navarro
Rachel Fernflores    Katherine O’Clair
Bruno Giberti        Rebekah Oulton
Helley Hurt          Robin Parent
Sadie Johann         Cesar Torres-Bustamonte
Ruth Kalin           Philip Valle
Lisa Kawamura
Alison Keleher
Melinda Keller
Appendix D
University Expository Writing Rubric

The University Expository Writing Rubric accounts for the following traits:

**PURPOSE**
- Does the writer address the assignment and write with a purpose that is clear to the reader?
- Is there an identifiable thesis or controlling idea?
- Does the writer understand and meet the audience's expectations?

**SYNTHESIS**
- Is the paper organized both locally (within paragraphs) and globally (as a whole)?
- Does the organizational strategy best express the purpose?
- Does the writer make connections between (un)related ideas, texts, perspectives, and experiences to construct a cohesive depiction of the topic?

**SUPPORT**
- Is the thesis fully supported with relevant evidence or does the essay rely on broad and general assertions?
- Is repetition mistaken for development?
- Are there errors in logic?

**STYLE**
- Does the writer make effective stylistic choices in terms of paragraphing, sentence structure, word choice, tone, introductions, conclusions, etc.?

**MECHANICS**
- Is the essay free of errors - spelling, punctuation, and grammar - that consistently impede or distort meaning?

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**
- Does the writer self-consciously and critically monitor and reflect on her choices as a writer? Her own reasoning?
- Does the writer move beyond summarizing her essay by explaining instead why he made particular rhetorical choices?
- Does the writer demonstrate an awareness of her creative process?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Poor/No Attainment Score=0</th>
<th>Minimal Attainment Score=1</th>
<th>Average Attainment Score=2</th>
<th>Good Attainment Score=3</th>
<th>Superior Attainment Score=4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
<td>Disregards assignment. No discernible focus/thesis. Unaware of audience’s expectations.</td>
<td>Seems aware of the assignment’s goals, but does not consistently meet them. Focus is mentioned, but shifts frequently, making the purpose unclear. Possible inappropriate shifts in audience.</td>
<td>Consistent effort to address assignment. Thesis/focus is generally clear, may be lost at times. Writes with an eye to audience, but some inconsistencies are evident.</td>
<td>The assignment is addressed. Thesis/focus is identifiable throughout the essay, but occasionally strays off topic. Seems aware of the audience’s expectations and attempts to cater the prose accordingly.</td>
<td>The assignment’s goals are shared by the writer, though the writer does not seem confined by them. The writer fully controls thesis throughout the essays and consistently meets the audience’s expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis:</strong></td>
<td>No attempt to synthesize texts/ideas; organization feels random, making cohesion impossible.</td>
<td>Preliminary attempts to synthesize texts/ideas; discussion feels unorganized at times; yet, some paragraphs/sections hold together.</td>
<td>Some attempts to synthesize complex texts/ideas, but cannot sustain the effort. Global organization is clear, but local organization may stray.</td>
<td>Synthesizes texts/ideas with some expertise and begins to formulate a cohesive look at the topic, but lacks some sophistication. Some missteps with organization.</td>
<td>Synthesizes texts/ideas with expertise, and formulates a sophisticated, complex discussion of the topic. Organization feels deliberate and complements the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support:</strong></td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are difficult to locate and are unsupported. Needless repetition takes the place of development.</td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are identifiable, but are not supported by evidence. Some repetition persists and makes reading difficult at times.</td>
<td>Assertions and/or conclusions are occasionally supported by evidence. Some generalities persist.</td>
<td>Clear assertions/conclusions are made; evidence is usually used effectively, but some errors in logic are detectable. Development aided by the inclusion of some key details.</td>
<td>Makes fully developed assertions and/or draws logical conclusions that are supported by the evidence. Consistently incudes details that point to the complex nature of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style:</strong></td>
<td>Simple sentences and word choice; paragraphs break randomly and may lack topic sentences.</td>
<td>Attempts at complex sentences/language and deliberate paragraph breaks, but awkward moments persist.</td>
<td>Demonstrates some adeptness when making stylistic choices, but style lacks consistency and refinement.</td>
<td>Generally writers with complex sentence structure and language; evidence of stylistic complexity.</td>
<td>Evidence of consistent, deliberate, and refined stylistic presence on the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong></td>
<td>Pervasive errors distort meaning and make reading difficult.</td>
<td>Some errors are significant and detract from the meaning. Piece requires closer editing.</td>
<td>Some errors impede reading, but the content is generally clear.</td>
<td>Minor errors are present but not too distracting. Content is clear.</td>
<td>The writing is near perfect with almost no errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-assessment:</strong></td>
<td>Fails to critically reflect on own reasoning/choices. Relies primarily on summary.</td>
<td>Fledgling attempts to reflect on choices, but lacks depth. Summary overshadows analysis.</td>
<td>Some attempts to reflect critically but cannot sustain the effort. Summary and analysis are more balanced.</td>
<td>A strong attempt at critical reflection is made. Reflection shows some depth. Summary is present, but not overwhelmingly so.</td>
<td>A fully, self-aware effort made to reflect critically. Choices and reasoning are self-consciously reflected upon. Summary is minimal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-consciously and critically reflects on choices made when constructing argument. Moves beyond summary.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E  
Reader Observations from GE Assessment Session

Assignment Design  
- Is it helpful in future workshops to score assignments? Some of the assignments are illegible, too long, too wordy, etc. Hypothesis: helping instructors write better assignments will help students perform better.  
- (Un)clarity of the assignment description has a direct relationship to quality of written piece.

Purpose/Support  
- Students often struggle to find a balance between overly personal and overly impersonal voice. That is, they write from a completely subjective place, which is not very convincing, or a place where their own ideas are lost in excessive reference to expert testimony. Ideally, their own ideas should be clearly expressed and supported.  
- Even in essays with considerable support, statements are commonly made without referencing any source or without an appropriate source.

Synthesis/Analysis  
- Sometimes there is a strong paragraph or section, but usually not sustained throughout the essay  
- A lot of the papers seem to describe their topics rather than analyze them

Organization  
- Persistent repetition often paired with and/or is an indication of organizational problems (at global and local levels)  
- I’m generally surprised by the lack of organizational structure in longer essays. Students seem to ramble with no logical coherence from start to finish.  
- The essays don’t establish upfront a type of roadmap of where the paper is headed or how it is organized.  
- A writing template or something else above and beyond a rubric is needed.  
- What is the standard beyond a five-paragraph essay? How do other disciplines answer this question?  
- How can we get students to state their thesis and explain what they will be exploring in their paper?  
- Students seem to feel the need to tiptoe around it (thesis) and imply it.

Conclusions  
- Students struggle with conclusions that do more than summarize the paper.

Style/Mechanics  
- Students often rely on a conversational tone, which is not always grammatically correct.
• How can we help students to write good, effective titles and help them not to forget to give a title?

Error
• Misuse of some words can be grammatically correct with unintended meanings (widely, wildly)
• Is it “statement.” or “statement”. (with the period outside the quotations)?

Citation/ Sources
• Troubles with citation Issues, formatting, footnoting
• One student mentions “online sources” but that doesn't mean anything since primary and secondary evidence are available online. Students need a clearer understanding of the types of evidence they are using.

Self-Assessment
• Some self-assessment is surface and repetitive. Students see comma placement, etc. as an issue, not development of ideas or synthesis.
• Self-assessment is used as a “weapon” to defend against choices that deviate from the prompt
• Some honesty in self-assessments about whether the assignment was a priority for the writers
• Self-assessment makes assertions about how the assignment makes them become a certain type of writer.
• In self-assessments, students express confused at how to wrap up papers w/out just summarizing
• Self-assessment seems to be understood as a chronological description of the making of the essay.

Consistency
• Some students open with outstanding 1st paragraphs then become disorganized and confused later; others start with a dazed and confused paragraph, but then get warmed up half way through the paper.

Logic/ Reasoning
• Balancing the attainment of persuasive writing with persuasion towards erroneous conclusions. Is it still good if it’s wrong?

General Assessment Experience
• The order in which I review papers influences my perception. Strict adherence to the rubric helps.
• I gave out some zeros. I feel guilty.
• Identifying and evaluating sources and their methods and arguments should be on a
writing rubric for research papers.

Revision
- The one, second draft I read was far superior to the rest (makes sense). This suggests that asking for rewrites is a good move.
Appendix F
Email to Solicit Participation in Senior-level Program-specific Writing Assessment

Department Heads/Chairs,

As part of our University/GE Assessment plan, we are in the second phase (artifact collection) of assessing writing across the campus. This assessment not only involves evaluating writing in introductory GE courses (i.e., ENGL 134) but also in courses reflecting senior-level work.

Matt Luskey and Dawn Janke, co-leaders of this writing assessment, are interested in identifying programs that would like to use a course-embedded approach to assess senior-level writing. This effort will yield data that will be beneficial to both university-wide writing assessment data as well as program-level data.

Please read the attached detailed description for more information and let Matt and Dawn know by April 10th if you are interested in participating in this assessment effort.

Matt and Dawn will be working directly with your faculty to provide guidance, artifact collection as well as analysis and assessment of data. You will be provided with the results of your program-level data that you can use for program-level assessment!

Thank you for considering participation in this important effort.

Sincerely,
Mary
Appendix G
Email to Department Contacts Selected for the Senior-Level Writing Assessment Pilot

Subject: Senior-Level Writing Assessment: Next Steps

Thank you for your interest in participating in senior-level writing assessment and for emailing us a copy of your assignment. We’re looking forward to working with you and colleagues from (name of program). We believe your engagement in this project will be very beneficial both to your program and university-wide assessment efforts.

In this email we explain the next steps of our assessment process, and we have also included an overview of the assessment process. While we will meet a number of times prior to the actual assessment session, we anticipate that assessment of student work will occur in late summer or early fall term, depending on faculty availability.

Below are the initial tasks we need to complete this term.

Next Steps of Our Assessment Process
Spring Term 2015

1) Please gather clean copies of the senior-level writing to be assessed from your course. Please make sure your students’ papers are free of any margin comments, end comments, and grades. In addition, please leave the students’ names on the essays so we can track demographics. We will remove all identifying information before we assess the student work.

   Option 1: If you are collecting hard copies, please collect two copies (one for your own grading and one clean copy for the assessment purposes). If need be, we can assist with the copying of papers. If you would like to submit hard copies, we will provide an envelope for gathering the samples. Just let me (Matt) know.

   Option 2: If you prefer, you can save a digital copy of the student writing by downloading papers submitted via PolyLearn. We can make arrangements to collect the digital copies via a dropbox, usb stick, or CD-ROM.

For now, please just make sure that you collect a clean copy of the writing assignment from each of your students.

2) Help us identify colleagues in your program who would like to participate in the reading of senior-level writing from your course. All program faculty are welcome to participate, especially those that teach the course from which the assignment is selected and/or courses that prepare students for work in the senior-level course.
3) Meet with Dawn and me to discuss any logistical questions about the process and to create a working calendar for the assessment stages described below. Ideally, we would like to meet with you and your colleagues who are interested in participating before the end of the term.

Overview of the Assessment Process
I think before this step we need something like, once the above tasks are completed and you have collected essays, Dawn and I will plan to meet with you and your faculty group in either summer or fall quarter. During that meeting we will

- **Step 1:** Select a range of student work (exemplary, proficient, inadequate) from the course and use this sample to customize and calibrate the University Learning Objectives (ULO) Expository Writing Rubric to meet the specific writing assignment. Note: This process can happen sooner, if you and a few colleagues are available.

At a subsequent meeting we will

- **Step 2:** Score the student work from the course using the customized University Expository Writing Rubric. We anticipate that this will take up to 3 hours.
- **Step 3:** At a follow-up meeting post assessment, we will
- **Step 4:** Analyze and discuss the results from the assessment scoring. We anticipate that this will take 1-2 hours.
- **Step 5:** Use the results to begin benchmarking senior-level writing in your program.
- **Step 5:** Dawn and I will work with your faculty to draft a brief assessment report about the process.

Dawn and I will facilitate each stage of this assessment process. Ultimately, we anticipate that the rich conversation among faculty regarding student writing will lead to the identification of additional ways to support the teaching and learning of writing in your program.

Thank you, again, for participating. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions about gathering artifacts, or any other aspect of this process. We’ll follow up in a couple weeks regarding student samples, faculty participation, and a good time to meet.
Appendix H
Biology 461 Writing Assignment

Due on 4/28, 5/12, 5/28, 6/11 - Proposal Requirements (for all drafts and the final version)

Format: margin must be at least one inch all across. Use Times New Roman size 12, Arial size 11 or Calibri size 11 for text. Spacing should be at least single-lined. Final proposal must be no more than 12 pages including figures and tables but excluding the references section. All drafts and the final version must have the following sections.

Title. The title should reflect the gist of the proposal

Summary. Summarize in few than 2000 characters what you intend to do, how you intend to do it and what makes it significant. In other words, cover the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’. Make it understandable to other science students not in your field of Biology. This is best to write after you have finished most of the proposal.

According to the NSF guideline, “it should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded. The summary should be written in the third person and include a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. It must clearly address...the intellectual merit of the proposed activity; and the broader impacts resulting from the proposed activity. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader.”

Introduction: Literature Review, Justification and Significance. This section is where you set up the readers to understand the ‘why’ of your proposed work. What makes it important that this project should be carried out and what would the readers need to know in order to understand how important this work is? What is the problem or question that your work will address? How does this proposal differ from previous work? This section is where you will put most of your literature search to work. Back up any ‘statement of fact’ with references and elaborate the findings with critical evaluation. In most cases a web reference will not do the trick. Some of the ‘what’ may need to be discussed here, but leave a detailed description of methods for later.

Hypotheses and Objectives. Here you outline what you propose as a solution to the problem described in the previous section through one or more hypothesis. This can be written into a paragraph or simply be a few bulleted sentences if the previous section contains sufficient detail. This is where you outline your objectives in a form as simple as possible. It must be clear that these objectives will serve to test the hypothesis you just laid out as well as solving (perhaps only partially) the problem you described above. This is the ‘what’ part of your proposal and you will flesh out the ‘how’ in the following section.
**Experimental Design and Data Analysis.** It is an essential part of the ‘how’ aspect of the proposal. Describe in detail how you will meet the objectives set out above. The kind of detail required does not include recipes or step-by-step protocols of common methods. Brief description is usually sufficient, unless the techniques involved are not familiar to the reviewers. Then, more detail explanation about the principles of the method should be elaborated in the Introduction. Likewise, if what you propose is especially unique or novel, extra detail will also be necessary. Do not forget that the research is not complete until the data is analyzed and the report is written. You should also use this section to convince your reviewers that you know what to do with the data. What kind of data do you expect? Will you be collecting replicate data that requires a statistical analysis? Will it be normally distributed such that parametric tests are appropriate? Or, will you use non-parametric methods? Provide some scenarios how the data will be interpreted. The data analysis part may be separated from the experimental procedure if desired. Data analysis may also be combined with the experimental procedures to allow better flow if discussions of data analysis are included in experiment descriptions (these data, that test, those data, this other test etc.)

**Expected Outcome.** The section is where you detail how the analysis of your data will result in the support or rejection of the hypotheses you laid out before. Use this section to remind the reviewers of your objectives and how you will meet them.

**Project Timeline and Budget (1 page max).** A detailed timeline that outlines the expected time to complete each objective (or task) and the order in which they will be attempted is essential in the proposal because it will assure your reviewers that you know what you are doing. Do not overlook the budget section as it can be the primary section of interest to many funding agencies. This is the point where you show the reviewers that you either have what you need (available equipment or supplies) or you know that it can be bought. It is not uncommon that this section requires a long time to develop. For this class, salary items can be omitted. Be sure that what you plan to spend on is necessary and reasonable to complete your project. Provide a brief justification for your budget.

**Tables and Figures (if any)** must be embedded within text. Titles and legends must be included for each table or figure.

**References.** In most scientific proposals, textbook, magazine, blog and most websites are not considered appropriate references. Therefore, the majority of the references must be peer-reviewed research articles; some can be peer-reviewed review articles. Cite references throughout the text in a consistent and accurate manner. Use the following website to learn how to cite references in your proposal: [http://lib.calpoly.edu/research/citations/apa.html](http://lib.calpoly.edu/research/citations/apa.html)
## Appendix I
### Biology 461 Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Poor Attainment Score = 1</th>
<th>Average Attainment Score = 2</th>
<th>Good Attainment Score = 3</th>
<th>Superior Attainment Score = 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> Addresses the assignment. Clearly articulates the focus/thesis and writes with an awareness of the audience’s expectations.</td>
<td>The proposal lacks a complete hypothesis that contains a statement of the problem and a testable mechanism. It is unclear how the hypothesis connects to a current problem. The writer does not address an audience of scientists who can determine the feasibility of the proposal. The writer significantly neglects to explain specialized terms. The proposal’s title is not appropriate, descriptive or specific.</td>
<td>The hypothesis contains a statement of the problem and a testable mechanism along with an attempt to connect the hypothesis to a current problem. The writer somewhat addresses an audience of scientists who can determine the feasibility and significance of the proposal. The writer occasionally explains specialized terms, but may not always do so appropriately or accurately. The proposal’s title is somewhat</td>
<td>The hypothesis contains a generally clear statement of the problem and a testable mechanism that considers evidence and background when framing the problem. The writer generally addresses an audience of scientists who can determine the feasibility and significance of the proposal. The writer explains specialized terms. The proposal’s title is generally appropriate, descriptive and specific.</td>
<td>The hypothesis contains a clear statement of the problem and a testable mechanism that takes into careful consideration current evidence and enough background to frame the problem. The writer notably addresses an audience of scientists who can determine the feasibility and significance of the proposal. When necessary, the writer explains specialized terms. The proposal’s title is notably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis: Organizes texts/ideas/information into a cohesive, organized discussion (both globally and locally).</td>
<td>The proposal lacks core sections and/or contains sections that are not well organized or coherent, and the proposal likely is not feasible. The review of the research literature neither identifies a gap in the research nor how the proposal will address it. The proposed research methods and procedures are insufficiently described. It is not evident how the experimental data will be collected. The experimental design does not fit with the proposed research.</td>
<td>The sections of the proposal are not consistently organized or coherent, and the proposal is only somewhat feasible. The review of the research literature hints at a gap in the research, but the reader may have to infer it. It is somewhat clear how the proposal will address the gap in knowledge. There is a somewhat clear description of the research methods and procedures. It is not entirely evident how the experimental data will be collected. The experimental design somewhat fits with the proposed research.</td>
<td>The sections of the proposal are generally coherent and organized, and the proposal seems feasible. The review of the research literature identifies a gap in the research and how the proposal will address it. There is a generally clear description of the research methods and procedures along with details for how the experimental data will be collected. The experimental design generally fits with the proposed research.</td>
<td>The sections of the proposal are notably coherent and organized, and the proposal is clearly feasible. The review of the research literature specifically identifies a gap in knowledge and how the research proposal will address it. There is a clear description of the research methods and procedures along with an distinct level of detail for how the experimental data will be collected. The experimental design fits elegantly with the proposed research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support: Assertions and/or conclusions are fully developed and are based on appropriate evidence.</td>
<td>The proposal lacks a sufficient discussion of data analysis that connects to the hypothesis, and does not account for variables. Few if any of the methods are referenced.</td>
<td>The support for the proposal includes a discussion of data analysis that somewhat connects to the hypothesis and accounts for variables. Some of the methods are and somewhat referenced.</td>
<td>The support for the proposal includes a generally clear and justified discussion of data analysis that connects to the hypothesis and accounts for variables. The methods are referenced.</td>
<td>The support for the proposal includes a notably clear and justified discussion of data analysis that appropriately fits the hypothesis and accounts for variables. All methods are clearly referenced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Style: Writing is stylistically complex (i.e. sentence structure, word choice, transitions, tone, and paragraphing). | The writer does not use scientific language accurately or appropriately. The relationship among the research proposal sections is unclear due to a lack of transitions and section headings. Sentences and paragraphs are not clear and concise. Tables | The writer somewhat uses relevant scientific language, but not always accurately or appropriately. The relationship among the research proposal sections is typically clear but would benefit from better transitions and section | The writer generally uses relevant scientific language and establishes the relationship among the research proposal sections through the use of transitions and section headings. Sentences and paragraphs are generally clear and concise. | The writer notably uses scientific language accurately and effectively conveys the relationship among the research proposal sections through the use of appropriate signal phrases, transitional language and clear headings. Sentences and |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>or figures (if any) are not embedded within the text and do not include titles and legends.</th>
<th>headings. Sentences and paragraphs are not always clear and concise. Tables or figures (if any) are embedded within the text, but may not include titles and legends.</th>
<th>Tables or figures (if any) are embedded within the text and include titles and legends.</th>
<th>paragraphs are clear and concise. Tables or figures (if any) are accurately embedded within the text and include titles and legends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong> Writing is free of spelling and punctuation errors. Content is clearly expressed.</td>
<td>The writing is unclear due to significant errors in spelling and grammar. The proposal requires closer editing.</td>
<td>The writing is generally clear, though some errors in spelling and grammar impede reading.</td>
<td>The writing is near perfect with almost no errors in spelling and grammar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science

Teaching reading is a job for an expert. Contrary to the popular theory that learning to read is natural and easy, learning to read is a complex linguistic achievement.

Excerpt from “Teaching reading is rocket science,” produced by American Federation of Teachers

Write a 5 paragraph argumentative essay that supports the premise that the teaching of reading requires the skills and knowledge of an expert. You may consider the following in your argument:

- The process of learning to read
- Theories of literacy learning
- The historical trends of literacy instruction
- Characteristics of highly effective literacy instruction

Style

Essays will conform to APA style. Grading will be based upon the quality of your argument and how clearly you support your claims with evidence. You are expected to incorporate key terms and concepts you have learned in this course. Points will be deducted for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.

Use of sources

Please use APA style to cite sources. It is expected that you will cite the textbook and at least two additional sources when making your argument. Please include a reference list with your essay.

Length

The essay should be five paragraphs and no more than 4 DOUBLE SPACED pages in length.
## Appendix K
### Education 428 Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Minimal Performance Score = 1</th>
<th>Average Performance Score = 2</th>
<th>Good Performances Score = 3</th>
<th>Superior Performance Score = 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong></td>
<td>The writer does not establish a thesis about the complexity of teaching reading. The writer does not or on only partially forecasts points that will be developed in the body paragraphs.</td>
<td>The writer establishes a thesis about the complexity of teaching reading but may not adequately forecast the main supporting points that will be developed in the body paragraphs.</td>
<td>The writer establishes a thesis that generally conveys the complexity of teaching reading and forecasts the main supporting points that will be developed in the body paragraphs.</td>
<td>The writer establishes a thesis that notably conveys the complexity of teaching reading and forecasts the main supporting points that will be developed in the body paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The writer does not address an audience.</td>
<td>The writer somewhat addresses an audience, but does not anticipate the reader’s concerns, biases, or arguments.</td>
<td>The writer generally addresses an expert audience who understands and appreciates the complexity of teaching of reading. The writer generally anticipates the reader’s concerns, biases, or arguments.</td>
<td>The writer notably addresses an expert audience who understands and appreciates the complexity of teaching of reading. When appropriate, the writer anticipates the reader’s concerns, biases, or arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis:</strong></td>
<td>The writer does not use the 5-paragraph form to organize and develop the thesis and supporting body paragraphs, though</td>
<td>The writer uses the 5-paragraph form to organize and develop the thesis and supporting body paragraphs, though</td>
<td>The writer generally uses the 5-paragraph form to organize and develop the thesis in a clear manner in each body paragraph.</td>
<td>The writer notably uses the 5-paragraph form to organize and develop the thesis in a clear and concise manner in each body paragraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion (both globally and locally)</td>
<td>Thesis with supporting body paragraphs. The writer’s position is not clearly stated in the conclusion. The paper is unconvincing.</td>
<td>Occasionally in ways that are formulaic and underdeveloped. The conclusion is identifiable, but mainly summarizes the supporting paragraphs.</td>
<td>Of the supporting body paragraphs. The conclusion restates the thesis, is generally sophisticated, and leaves the reader understanding the writer's position.</td>
<td>The supporting body paragraphs. The conclusion begins with an effective restatement of the thesis and is sophisticated, strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position.</td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support:</strong> Assertions and/or conclusions are fully developed and are based on appropriate evidence.</td>
<td>The writer does not provide adequate evidence to support the thesis. Most claims are unsupported.</td>
<td>The writer provides evidence to support the thesis, but it may not always be specific and relevant. Some claims are supported with evidence, which includes sources, facts, and statistics, but they may lack credibility and accuracy.</td>
<td>The writer generally provides specific and relevant sources of evidence to support the thesis. Most claims are supported with evidence, which includes supportive sources, facts, and statistics that are generally credible and reported accurately.</td>
<td>The writer provides at least three specific and highly relevant sources of evidence to support the thesis. All claims are reinforced with evidence, such as supportive sources, facts, and statistics that are credible and reported accurately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style:</strong> Writing is stylistically complex (i.e. sentence structure, word choice, transitions,</td>
<td>The writer’s vocabulary and word choice lack a basic understanding of the topic and do not</td>
<td>The writer’s vocabulary and word choice demonstrate a basic understanding of the topic and include a limited</td>
<td>The writer’s vocabulary and word choice demonstrate a generally clear understanding of the topic and include a</td>
<td>The writer’s vocabulary and word choice demonstrate a clear and notable understanding of the topic and include a diversity of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone, and paragraphing)</td>
<td>Include key terms. Sentences are poorly constructed and lack varied structured.</td>
<td>Set of key terms. Sentences are somewhat well constructed but lack varied structured.</td>
<td>Diversity of key terms, used appropriately and in a suitable way. Sentences are generally well constructed with varied structured.</td>
<td>Key terms, used appropriately and in a sophisticated way. Sentences are well constructed with varied structured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics:</strong></td>
<td>Writing is free of spelling and punctuation errors. Content is clearly expressed.</td>
<td>Some errors are significant and detract from the meaning. Piece requires closer editing.</td>
<td>Some errors impede reading but the content is generally clear.</td>
<td>The writing is near perfect with almost no errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>