

The University of Montana – Missoula

University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment

Preliminary Report for the Spring 2014 Writing Assessment

Overview:

The University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment was approved by the Faculty Senate in Fall 2013 and has replaced the Upper-division Writing Proficiency Assessment on the UM campus. The new assessment provides relevant information about student writing proficiency by assessing and scoring student-revised papers from Approved Writing courses using a holistic scoring rubric. The assessment process offers professional development opportunities for faculty and staff that are committed to improving student writing proficiency at UM. The first Writing Assessment took place in Spring 2014 during which the ASCRC Writing Committee collected student papers from 58 Approved Writing courses, which enrolled 1300 students. In April, 36 faculty, staff, and graduate students from the UM-Missoula and Missoula College volunteered to score a representative sample of student papers at the Writing Assessment Retreat.

The Spring 2014 University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment was accomplished collaboratively. Beverly Chin, Chair of the ASCRC Writing Committee, provided leadership and guidance and facilitated the retreat. Arlene Walker-Andrews, Associate Provost, provided institutional support and advice on data and sampling. Nancy Clouse from UMOline, prepared the data collection process and facilitated data retrieval once student samples were uploaded. Camie Foos, Faculty Senate, coordinated preparations for the retreat, participant attendance and the evaluation summary. Naomi Kimbell, Assessment Coordinator, facilitated communications with writing faculty, provided staff assistance for the retreat and prepared the final report. Additionally, staff, students and faculty from the Writing Center, the Department of English, the Provost's office and the Writing Committee helped to make the 2014 assessment a success.

Gathering Papers and Student Surveys on Revision:

By the April 11th deadline, 348 writing samples were submitted to Moodle and 385 surveys were completed for a 26% participation rate. Most of the Approved Writing courses included in the 2014 assessment were 100-200 level courses. There was one 300-level course.

- Students were responsible for submitting their own papers and completing the survey.
- Instructors were asked not to submit on behalf of their students and Moodle prohibited them from doing so.
- The Assessment Coordinator did not submit on behalf of students.
- Instructors had the ability to monitor student submissions to make sure students were participating.
- In the survey responses as of April 11th, 22 % of students reported that they did not revise their papers, 38% revised their papers once, 26% revised their papers twice and 14% revised their paper more than two times.
- After the April 11th deadline, submissions and survey responses did not increase significantly.
 - 41 more papers were submitted and 20 additional surveys were completed.
 - The additional survey responses did not change the statistics significantly, with 21% of students reporting they had not revised their papers, 38% revised them once, 27% revised them twice and 14% revised them more than two times.
 - The Moodle shell was closed for submissions April 16th in order to pull the sample.
- Of the 58 Approved Writing courses entered into Moodle, course participation as of the April 11th deadline breaks down as follows:
 - 28% of courses had no writing samples submitted.
 - 28% of courses had fewer than 25% total submissions.
 - Most in this category fell well under 10% with only one or two submissions for the entire class.
 - 29% of courses had 25%-75% total submissions.
 - 14% of courses had 80%-90% total submissions.
 - There were no courses in which there was full participation.

Writing Assessment Retreat Participants:

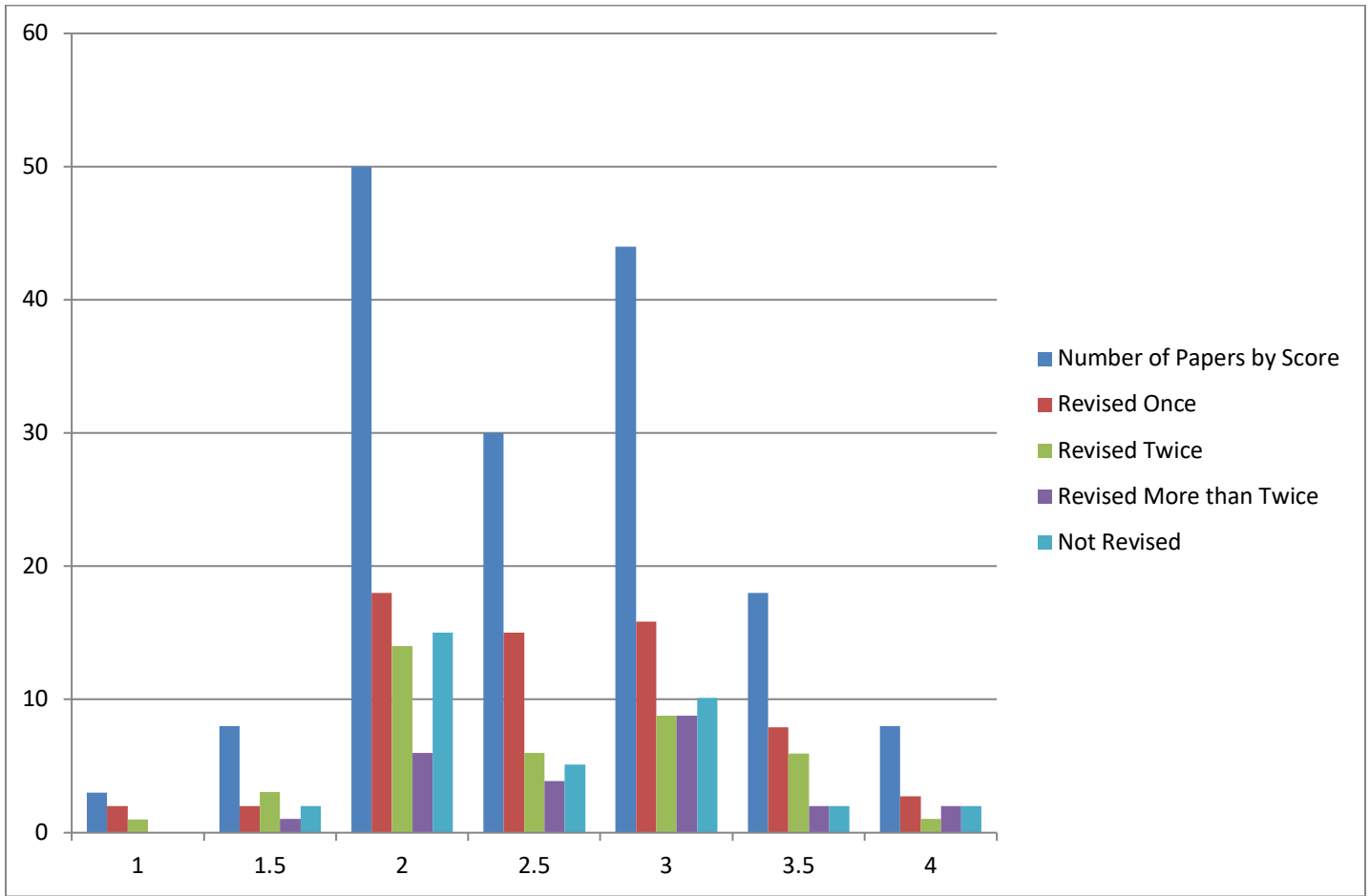
During the Spring 2014 retreat, 36 volunteer faculty, staff, and graduate students from both UM and Missoula College read and scored student submissions. There were representatives from a variety of disciplines including English, Composition, Social Work, Geography, Linguistics, Business, Economics, Applied Arts and Sciences, Accounting, the Mansfield Library, the Writing Center, Education, Health and Biomedical Sciences, and Chemistry. Participants learned how to apply the Holistic Scoring Rubric accurately, consistently, and efficiently to student papers.

Scoring Data:

The random sample pulled from Moodle consisted of 211 papers, 161 of which were scored at the retreat. Of the scored papers:

- 5% received a score of 4
 - 38% were revised once
 - 13% were revised twice
 - 25% were revised more than two times
 - 25% were not revised
- 11% received a score of 3.5
 - 44% were revised once
 - 33% were revised twice
 - 11% were revised more than two times
 - 11% were not revised
- 27% received a score of 3
 - 36% were revised once
 - 20% were revised twice
 - 20% were revised more than two times
 - 23% were not revised
- 19% received a score of 2.5
 - 50% were revised once
 - 20% were revised twice
 - 13% were revised more than two times
 - 17% were not revised
- 31% received a score of 2
 - 36% were revised once
 - 28% were revised twice
 - 6% were revised more than two times
 - 30% were not revised
- 5% received a score of 1.5
 - 25% were revised once
 - 38% were revised twice
 - 13% were revised more than two times
 - 25% were not revised
- 2% received a score of 1
 - 67% were revised once
 - 33% were revised twice

Score Compared to Number of Revisions-Graph:



Types of Feedback used in Revisions:

Most papers that were revised at least once used more than one type of feedback. Of the revised papers, 100% reported using written feedback from instructors during revisions and, of those:

- 45% also used the rubric
- 51% also used line editing
- 46% also used in-person discussion
- 23% also used email feedback
- 43% also used group discussion

Scoring Results- 8-Point Scale/4-Point Scale Comparison:

8-Point Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4-Point Score	1		2		3		4	
Total Papers	3	8	50	30	44	18	8	0
8-Point %	2%	5%	32%	19%	27%	11%	5%	
4-Point %	7%		50%		39%		5%	

Scoring Results-Table:

8-Point Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4-Point Score	1		2		3		4	
Paper Code	WAS-14-65	WAS-14-41	WAS-14-02	WAS-14-01	WAS-14-14	WAS-14-04	WAS-14-62	
	WAS-14-162	WAS-14-54	WAS-14-03	WAS-14-05	WAS-14-17	WAS-14-09	WAS-14-98	
	WAS-14-191	WAS-14-83	WAS-14-08	WAS-14-13	WAS-14-24	WAS-14-39	WAS-14-118	
		WAS-14-106	WAS-14-11	WAS-14-20	WAS-14-30	WAS-14-59	WAS-14-122	
		WAS-14-141	WAS-14-15	WAS-14-28	WAS-14-36	WAS-14-84	WAS-14-148	
		WAS-14-151	WAS-14-18	WAS-14-32	WAS-14-40	WAS-14-92	WAS-14-198	
		WAS-14-201	WAS-14-19	WAS-14-42	WAS-14-46	WAS-14-103	WAS-14-206	
		WAS-14-202	WAS-14-22	WAS-14-49	WAS-14-47	WAS-14-109	WAS-14-210	
			WAS-14-23	WAS-14-50	WAS-14-48	WAS-14-115		
			WAS-14-25	WAS-14-53	WAS-14-51	WAS-14-120		
			WAS-14-26	WAS-14-69	WAS-14-57	WAS-14-121		
			WAS-14-43	WAS-14-81	WAS-14-58	WAS-14-124		
			WAS-14-44	WAS-14-88	WAS-14-61	WAS-14-126		
			WAS-14-52	WAS-14-91	WAS-14-66	WAS-14-133		
			WAS-14-55	WAS-14-116	WAS-14-68	WAS-14-147		
			WAS-14-56	WAS-14-123	WAS-14-71	WAS-14-149		
			WAS-14-70	WAS-14-130	WAS-14-73	WAS-14-156		
			WAS-14-74	WAS-14-142	WAS-14-75	WAS-14-186		
			WAS-14-77	WAS-14-144	WAS-14-79			
			WAS-14-80	WAS-14-155	WAS-14-82			
			WAS-14-86	WAS-14-158	WAS-14-85			
			WAS-14-89	WAS-14-160	WAS-14-93			
			WAS-14-90	WAS-14-164	WAS-14-100			
			WAS-14-95	WAS-14-169	WAS-14-111			
			WAS-14-96	WAS-14-170	WAS-14-113			
			WAS-14-97	WAS-14-177	WAS-14-117			
			WAS-14-101	WAS-14-179	WAS-14-127			
			WAS-14-104	WAS-14-189	WAS-14-136			
			WAS-14-108	WAS-14-193	WAS-14-137			
			WAS-14-114	WAS-14-195	WAS-14-143			
			WAS-14-125		WAS-14-145			
			WAS-14-132		WAS-14-146			
			WAS-14-134		WAS-14-154			
			WAS-14-138		WAS-14-157			
			WAS-14-152		WAS-14-167			
			WAS-14-163		WAS-14-168			
			WAS-14-165		WAS-14-173			
			WAS-14-166		WAS-14-174			
			WAS-14-171		WAS-14-176			
			WAS-14-178		WAS-14-181			
			WAS-14-180		WAS-14-183			
			WAS-14-184		WAS-14-190			
			WAS-14-185		WAS-14-205			
			WAS-14-192		WAS-14-207			
			WAS-14-196					
			WAS-14-197					
			WAS-14-199					
			WAS-14-200					
			WAS-14-203					
			WAS-14-209					

Issues and Feedback from Participants at the Writing Assessment Retreat:

- Participation
 - Some retreat participants cited the early deadline as a factor in the low participation rate and the high number of student submissions that were not revised.
 - Prior to the retreat, some faculty and instructors said they were unaware of the participation requirement as they were asked to teach a writing course after the initial information about the assessment had been sent out.
 - Prior to the retreat, some faculty and instructors had incorrect information about the assessment process and participation and passed this misinformation onto their students.
- Student Writing Samples
 - Some retreat participants noticed they were reading papers that were in various stages of completion.
 - Some retreat participants noticed that there were many papers from the same classes however they understood that as more students participate in future assessments, the sample will become more diverse.
- Writing Instruction
 - Some retreat participants said they would like more information and advice about incorporating the holistic rubric into course instruction for both beginning and skilled writers.
 - Retreat participants noticed during scoring that “good writing is good writing” and were pleased that basic writing conventions and skills were easy to identify from subject area to subject area.
 - Retreat participants said that the training they received in using the rubric helped them better understand it and gave them ideas for using the rubric more effectively in their courses.
- Professional Development
 - Retreat participants said they appreciated meeting writing instructors from a variety of departments and were glad to find that there was consistency in evaluating student writing samples across disciplines.
 - Retreat participants expressed appreciation that students seemed to be encouraged to express themselves creatively and freely while learning writing conventions.
 - Retreat participants said they developed a better understanding of what “proficiency” means within the context of student writing as a result of the training.
 - New faculty at the retreat expressed appreciation for the opportunity to receive training on the use of the holistic rubric as well as developing a better understanding of writing instruction at UM.
 - Retreat participants said they welcomed additional opportunities to participate in professional development centered on student writing.

Thoughts going forward:

There was extensive discussion about the need to collect a more complete set of papers from Approved Writing courses at UM. One proposed solution was to adjust the timing of the collection of papers in relation to the assessment retreat. Beverly Chin, Chair of the ASCRC Writing Committee, proposed a Winter intersession retreat or an early Spring retreat that would allow students to submit their final papers from Spring 2014 and Autumn 2014 courses at the conclusion of the semester. Participants at the retreat supported this idea.

Evaluation Summary:

Your name (optional) _____

Please respond to this evaluation. Your comments will help the Writing Committee write its 2014 report and will assist in our implementation of next year’s University-wide Program-Level Writing Assessment. Thank you.

A. Please check the statement that best reflects your knowledge and experience with writing assessment before this retreat.

27 1. I have created and used rubrics to assess students’ writing.

 2 2. I knew about rubrics, but have not used them regularly in my assessment of students’ writing.

 3. I did not know about rubrics for assessment of students’ writing.

B. Please place a check in the column that represents your opinion.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. This retreat helped me understand and apply a holistic rubric to students’ writing.	20	8	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. This retreat helped me assess students’ writing accurately and efficiently.	14	13	1	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. This workshop was a valuable professional development experience for me.	21	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I would recommend this retreat to my colleagues.	23	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Please write your responses to these 2 items. Feel free to continue your responses on the back of this page.

1. What aspects of this retreat were most useful for you?

- Practice applying the rubric- multiple rounds were crucial
- Hearing opinions / reasoning from colleagues in other disciplines
- Table conversation and consensus building
- Meeting people
- Discussion with others interested in writing
- The two most important aspects were reading widely varying pieces and getting to discuss the scores for genres with which we were unfamiliar. These helped me see the range and purpose of writing courses differently than I had before – a great experience

- It is always so fruitful to see what writing at the 200-level looks like across disciplines
- Thinking about assessing writing in a holistic way
- Talking to instructors from a variety of departments (hearing their opinions about writing expectations.)
- The discussion of rankings among people at the table and coming to a consensus. Also the rubrics themselves
- Meeting / connecting with other instructors, sharing thoughts on what makes writing effective / Ineffective
- Cross discipline collaboration and discussion
- Reinforced my assessment practices- gave me a better understanding of ASCRC requirements
- Meeting colleagues, having the opportunity to share tools and challenges with other educators. Sky club was a great space. Food service was wonderful... event ran smoothly
- Lovely! This year's retreat seemed to run even more smoothly than last year's Enjoyable and productive. Thank you
- Team building and developing consensus. Also helped to reassure me that I am fairly and effectively evaluating student writing
- Communication with colleagues
- Food was fabulous
- What a great day! Loved the holistic approach at the first section of the retreat where we trained and "normed" with the blue (anchor) papers
- It was nice to see the range of writing tasks and the capabilities of our students. It was also great to talk through writing assessment with new colleagues
- Discussing assessment with colleagues
- By exposing myself to the rubric I am able to evaluate and re-evaluate my relationship to writing instruction, both in relation to this campus' objectives and the trajectory of writing outside the academy
- The excellent discussions about the application of the holistic rubric
- Sharing thoughts on writing quality with my colleagues
- Hearing from other campus faculty / that otherwise don't get to hear from
- Listening to colleagues views
- The discussions that occurred re: consensus
- Beverly's leadership/ organization
- Megan's leadership at our table
- Table discussion concerning various *themes* of writing as applied to the rubric
- Evaluating / assessing the writing, using the rubric. I'd like to use it with my students
- Discussing papers assessed together as a group- hearing others' particular biases in weighing certain outcomes more than others
- Professional conversations – I valued the opportunity to learn from my colleagues in other disciplines. I learned how we read differently, value different features, and therefore assess student writing differently
- I felt that the breadth of papers (both in their variety and numbers) were great for looking at writing across campus. My table was very strong and thoughtful when talking through disagreements
- Actual practice applying rubric to student submissions, table discussions, examples at start of session of 1-4 submissions

2. What might be changed to improve this retreat?

- The retreat was excellent. Maybe give each table a copy of the agenda / schedule
- Final papers instead of drafts
- More faculty
- I thought the retreat was great, but I would recommend doing one version of this departmentally for all instructors teaching writing courses. I think it would be extremely helpful.
- Bonus for staying the whole time.
- It might be helpful to change seating order halfway through, so we could work with more participants.
- Expand the time available to go through the anchor papers and the training papers. It felt a little rushed as compared to the consensus papers.
- Include assignments, continue to recruit more tenure-track faculty, slightly slower pacing with training papers
- Earlier in the semester would be better
- A broader range of discipline specific assignments would also be helpful
- Perhaps try to score only revised material from completed portfolios
- I didn't find the section with the purple (training) papers to be helpful to my understanding of the process
- Some group discussion about the rubric, rather than explanation would be great. We could discuss the purposes, varied tasks, campus writing goals, etc and the assessment of such pieces with the rubric
- Preview distinctions between expressing and supporting opinion and persuasive /argumentative composition
- The initial steps of the retreat were extremely helpful but very rushed. I think it would be infinitely valuable to have more time to acquaint ourselves with these guidelines.
- Greater variety of genres in general in training / anchor papers
- Well organized. Thank you
- We need to know the prompt – hard to apply neutral rubric when reading papers from some assignment. The training paper scored 4 seemed off and we had wide scores on that one. But our “real” papers were much closer in scoring
- None
- Need to spend more time on training
- Keep improving on the diversity of the papers across disciplines. Figure out a way to share the results of the writing assessment to help instructors improve their teaching. The PD model of workshops sounds great.
- Well done! Maybe a bit more time for the initial value models
- The first part of the rubric addresses purpose, but how can we assess with such little information?
- Moments during the training sets felt rushed with little time for discussion. I think whole-group discussions about the training papers would be helpful (but I realize time-intensive, too!)
- I think perhaps handing out a writing set of instructions before starting with the anchor papers might help facilitate the work we do in our tables.
- How does the actual assignments of the papers impact assessment?
- Atmosphere / location of retreat excellent- conducive to a productive retreat
- More relevant / interesting dynamic for me to review scholarship in my discipline in such a retreat
- Food service was great
- We need such a session held for our professors at the School of Business if possible