

**Institutional Learning Outcomes
Written Communication
Fall 2012 Pilot Assessment Report**

**Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee
Los Angeles Mission College**

Assumption:

The college recognizes that it is important for students to be proficient at written communication when they leave Mission College since it is one of LAMC's Institutional Learning Outcomes.

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present the process, results, observations, and recommendations of the fall 2012 pilot assessment of the Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO) for Written Communication.

Assessment Process:

1. The assessment methods and process were developed by a volunteer committee during the fall 2012 semester.
2. A variety of instructors were asked to provide written assignments written by random students during the fall 2012 semester. 109 student writing assignments were collected and the nature of each assignment and the course for which they were written are presented in the table below:

Semester	Course	Assignment	~# of pages	# of assignments
Fall 2012	Microbiology 20	disease paper	>3	12
Fall 2012	Physiology 1	disease paper	>3	12
Fall 2012	Physics 6	lab report conclusion	1	11
Fall 2012	English 205	essay	4	5
Fall 2012	English 101	essay	2	15
Fall 2012	Art 502	art review	<1	20
Fall 2012	Art 109	art review	<1	17
Fall 2012	CAOT 31	personal goals	<1	10
Fall 2012	Health 11	disease summary	1	5
Fall 2012	Child Development	log	1	4

3. Each assignment was scored independently by two reviewers from the assessment committee using a rubric addressing the assignment's **content**, the quality of its **organization**, and the quality of **grammar**, with full credit for each category defined in the rubric used as follows:

- **Content** – *“Excellent clarity and focus of the topic. Excellent logic, organization, and coherence.”*
- **Organization** – *“Effective organization. Competent paragraphing and essay structure.”*
- **Grammar** – *“Grammar and punctuation are excellent with minimal errors in tense, sentence structure, and punctuation.”*

Each assessor assigned a score ranging from 0 to 3 for each category and the scores were averaged for each assignment. An average score for all 109 assignments was then calculated for each category.

Assessment Results:

Average scores in each category for all 109 assignments are shown below:

	Content	Organization	Grammar
Average raw score	2.36	2.07	1.99
Average percent score	78.7%	69.0%	66.3%

Assuming a benchmark of 70% for each writing component, these results indicate that our students exceed the benchmark with regard to presenting the content of the paper, and are close to but just short of the benchmark for with regard to grammar and organization. The writing component for which students scored lowest was grammar, and thus this would appear to be where student improvement is most needed.

Critique of the Assessment

While the scores obtained indicate that our students are very close to the benchmark for written communication, there are significant shortcomings with the method used:

- We don’t know to what degree each student was educated at Mission College, only that they took the indicated course. Ideally we would assess students who have taken their English courses at Mission College, and focus the assessment on students who are on the verge of completing their education at our school.
- The sample size of 109 was relatively small (~1% of LAMC students) and thus may not accurately represent the student body as a whole.
- Each student could have gotten help in writing his/her assignment. While we encourage students who struggle with writing to seek help, any help a student receives for an assignment used for this assessment could inflate the score. To accurately assess our students, we need to assess assignments for which the student does not receive any help.
- The assignments assessed were very heterogeneous in terms of the nature and length of the assignment, and, presumably, the expectations of the instructor (i.e., how it would be graded).

For example, some assignments were multi-page formal essays or papers and others were less formal and less than a page. A more consistent type of writing assignment will be required to accurately assess student written communication.

Recommendations

While the shortcomings listed above indicate that this assessment is somewhat unreliable, these shortcomings can be easily remedied as outlined below.

- The students assessed should be limited to those who:
 - are close to graduating
 - have taken their English requirements at LAMC
 - have identified LAMC as their primary campus

This can be accomplished by obtaining the student ID number of each student assessed. In this way a subset of students can be identified that meet the requirements for the assessment.

- A larger student sample size that represents a cross section of LAMC disciplines should be arranged. This could be accomplished by identifying exit courses in each discipline as a source of students to assess.
- The assignment assessed should be written on site in a single session to ensure that what is written is derived solely from that student. This recommendation would be more challenging to implement and would require A) the cooperation of instructors in the relevant courses or B) a special event outside of regular classes, something that other schools do for this very purpose.
- The assignment assessed should be standardized in terms of topic, length and instructions. Implementation of this recommendation would also require A) the cooperation of instructors in the relevant courses or B) a special event outside of regular classes, something that other schools do for this very purpose.

In addition we recommend that this report and the rubric used for this assessment be reviewed by the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) to provide guidance in planning the next assessment of the Institutional Learning Outcome for Written Communication.