**WCCCC 2019-20**

**Report on Written Communication Competency**

**WSCUC Core Competency Assessment, AY 2019-20**

Reported by **Written Communication Core Competency Committee** (WCCCC)

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

**July 2020**



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report on ***Written Communication Competency*** (WCC) of undergraduate graduating seniors pursuing either a Bachelor of Art (BA) degree or a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree at California State University, Fresno, has been prepared by the Written Communication Core Competency Committee (WCCCC).

***Written Communication Competency*** is one of the five core competencies identified by WASC Senior College and University Commission’s Standard. The written communication competency assessed in AY2019-20 is one of five core competencies of a Comprehensive Core Competency Assessment Plan of the University; the others are Oral Communication (evaluated in 2016-17), Quantitative Reasoning (evaluated in 2017-18), Information Literacy (evaluated in 2018-19), and Critical Thinking (to be evaluated in 2020-21).

The WCCCC is comprised eight faculty members, representing six of the seven colleges that offer UG degrees of the University. In AY 2019-20, the Committee worked on: (i) developing a written communication rubric, (ii) collecting sample work of graduating seniors of different colleges, (iii) evaluating the written communication work of the graduating seniors, and (iv) reporting on the findings of the written communication assessment.

To evaluate the development and expression of ideas of the graduating seniors, a written communication rubric, modeled after the Written Communication Value Rubric of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (or AACU), was developed. Four specific criterion of the rubric were: (i) ***Context of and Purpose for Writing***, (ii) ***Content Development***, (iii) ***Genre and Disciplinary Conventions***, and (iv) ***Control of Syntax and Mechanics***. Each criterion was rated on a 1-to-4-point scale; with 4 being “exemplary” and 1 being “beginning”. Proficiency was deemed achieved if a criterion is rated 3 or better, with the Committee’s expectation that 90% or more of students’ work would be proficient.

In all, the Committee evaluated over 150 papers and, concluded:

* ***Context of and Purpose for Writing***: 86.4% of the collected papers were worthy of a rating of 3 or better.
* ***Content Development***: 85.2% of the collected papers were worthy of 3 or better.
* ***Genre and Disciplinary Conventions***: 85.7% of the collected papers were worthy of a rating of 3 or better.
* ***Control of Syntax and Mechanics***: 92.2% of the collected papers were worthy of a rating of 3 or better.

Based on the benchmark established for satisfactory performance, only one of the four criterion – Criterion 4 – met the expectation. Notwithstanding of the criterion that failed slightly short of the Committee’s expectation, all the graduating seniors are deemed to possess adequate skills in expressing their ideas via writing.

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**Chapter 1 – WSCUC Accreditation, Comprehensive Core Competency Assessment Plan, and Written Communication Core Competency Committee**

* 1. **WSCUC Accreditation**

The ***WASC Senior College and University Commission*** ([WSCUC](https://www.wscuc.org/)) is a regional accrediting agency, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, promoting the development of higher education in the Western region (e.g., California, Hawaii, and the Pacific). Through its review processes, WSCUC confirms that an institution has substantially met the Commission’s [Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation](https://www.wscuc.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013/part-ii-core-commitments-and-standards-accreditation) and its [thirty-nine Criteria for Review](https://www.wscuc.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013/part-ii-core-commitments-and-standards-accreditation/understanding-wasc-standards) and, thus, possesses the resources, policies, and practices to achieve its educational goals and has provided evidence of the quality of its educational programs.

[California State University, Fresno](https://www.wscuc.org/institutions/california-state-university-fresno) (CSU Fresno) is a WSCUC accredited higher education institution since 1954. CSU Fresno’s most recent reaffirmation or reaccreditation review took place in AY2015-16. CSU Fresno’s next reaffirmation review will begin in spring 2025, with an on-site visit scheduled in the fall 2025. CSU Fresno’s WSCUC accreditation information can be found here: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/oie/assessment/wscucinfo/index.html>.

**1.2 CSU Fresno’s Comprehensive Core Competency Assessment Plan**

The WSCUC Commission Action Letter to the University, dated March 2, 2016, required that an Interim Report to be submitted in the fall of 2020, for a mid-cycle review in spring 2021. The Interim Report is, among others, to showcase the implementation of a five-year ***Comprehensive Core Competency Assessment Plan***, addressing the assessment and outcomes of the five core competencies per WSCUC’s Standard 2, provision 2.2a, which includes written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking.

The full detail of the Plan can be found here: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/oie/assessment/wasccorecomptencies/index.html>

The implementation of the Plan began in AY2016-17, and the timeline of assessment of the five core competencies is as follows:

* Oral Communication, AY2016-17
* Quantitative Reasoning, AY 2017-18
* Information Literacy, AY2018-19
* Written Communication, AY2019-20
* Critical Thinking, AY2020-21

**1.3 Written Communication Core Competency Committee (WCCCC)**

The formulation process of the Written Communication Core Competency Committee (WCCCC) began in spring 2019, under the leadership of Dr. Melissa Jordine, Director of Assessment, CSU Fresno. Working with Assessment Coordinators of all seven colleges of the University, Dr. Jordine and the team of college’s Assessment Coordinators worked to identify and recruit members from the University community to serve on WCCCC.

The membership of WCCCC was finalized near the end of spring 2019, and the final roster of WCCCC comprised of eight faculty members from seven colleges:

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***1.3.1 Charge of WCCCC***

The charge of WCCCC in AY2019-20 was to:

1. Develop a rubric for the assessment of Written Communication skill of graduating seniors,
2. Collect and evaluate work of graduating seniors for Written Communication competency, and
3. Report findings on Written Communication assessment.

**Chapter 2 – Written Communication Core Competency Committee**

**2.1 Rubric for Assessment of Written Communication Competency**

The Committee met in several occasions throughout the AY2019-20. One of the first accomplishments was the development of the rubric for assessment of written communication competency – See Table 1. The rubric for Written Communication Competency was modeled and modified after the [Written Communication VALUE Rubric](https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/written-communication) per Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU).

To evaluate the development and expression of ideas in writing, four specific criterion deemed appropriate by the Committee were established:

***Criterion 1*** – ***Context of and Purpose for Writing***. This criterion assesses the level of understanding of context, audience, and purposed relevant to the writing task.

***Criterion 2 – Content Development***. This criterion assesses the use of appropriate and relevant content in developing and sharping ideas in the writing task.

***Criterion 3 – Genre and Disciplinary Conventions***. This criterion assesses the writer’s ability to demonstrate clear and consistent organization pattern in writing, and formulate structural elements following formal and informal rules of specific genre or discipline.

***Criterion 4 – Control of Syntax and Mechanics***. This criterion assesses the writer’s ability to use quality language in communicating meaning as well as the control over use of syntax and mechanics in writing.

Each criterion is rated on 1-to-4-point scale; with 4 being “exemplary” and 1 being “beginning”. To be deemed proficiency a criterion needs to be rated a 3 or better, and with the expectation that 90% or more of students’ work would be proficient.

**2.2 Norming Sessions for WCCCC**

Norming sessions, one in fall 2019 and another in spring 2020, were conducted by the Committee, as groups of two committee members were paired together in the eventual evaluation of student written work. Participation in the norming sessions allowed members to be familiar, consistent and in agreement on how standards of performance (i.e., rubric) were to be applied to student work.

Five written papers, provided by Dr. Melissa Jordine who is a subject expert of these papers, were used during the norming sessions. These papers came from two courses:

***HONOR 12*** (or ***HON 12***) – ***US in the Twentieth Century World – Global Culture, History, and Values***. HON 12, open only to students in the Smittcamp Family Honors College, examines the role of the United States in the world during the long twentieth century.

***HISTORY 140*** (or ***HIST 140***) – ***Holocaust***. This course discusses the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the origins of the persecution and murder of Jews, ghettos, concentration and death camps in Germany and Eastern Europe, and the aftermath, including the Nuremberg Trials.

**2.3 Selection of Student Work for Assessment**

The Committee collected over 150 papers from graduating seniors (i.e., no more than three semesters from graduation) of the following courses for assessment purposes:

***CFS 130W – Professional Writing***. Professional writing in Child and Family Science, including correspondence, memos, and literature reviews. Emphasis on APA style. Meets the upper-division writing skills requirement for graduation.

***ENGL 112 – World Literature: Ancient***.  Analysis of texts (in translation) from c. 1650 BCE-750 CE, from areas such as China, India, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome. Possible topics: epics and empires, civilization and wilderness, lyric experience, dramatizations of love and terror, and quests for wisdom.

***ENGL 174 – Popular Fiction***. Survey of major types of popular genre fiction (detective, horror, spy, science fiction, Western, fantasy, etc.) Discussion; writing. Examination of works in cultural and historical context and as literary and commercial art.

***HUM 104 – Humanities in the Middle Ages and Renaissance***. An examination of art, literature, philosophy, and music and their interrelationships in European culture during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

***HUM 105 – Cultures of the Portuguese-Speaking World***. Interdisciplinary approach to global examination of cultural productions of the Portuguese-speaking world through readings, lectures, films, and other media. Taught in English using representative literary works in translation.

***CE 180B – Senior Project***. Synthesis of previous coursework into a civil engineering design project under the supervision of a faculty member.

***BIOL 105 – Evolution***. Evolutionary processes and patterns.

**TABLE 1 - Written Communication Rubric**

Students will be able to communicate effectively in writing to a wide variety of audiences. **Written communication** is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | What is being assessed | **Exemplary****(4)** | **Proficient****(3)** | **Developing****(3)** | **Beginning****(1)** |
| **Context of and Purpose for Writing** |

|  |
| --- |
| Level of understanding of context, audience, and purpose relevant to the writing task. |

 | Demonstrates a **thorough understanding** of context, audience, and purpose, to the assigned task and focuses **all elements of the work**. | Demonstrates **adequate consideration** of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task. | Demonstrates **awareness** of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task.  | Demonstrates **minimal attention** to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task. |
| **Content Development** |

|  |
| --- |
| Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop ideas, situate ideas in a disciplinary context, and shape the work. |

 | Uses **compelling** content to illustrate mastery of the subject through the **whole work**. | Uses **appropriate** content to explore ideas through the **whole work**. | Uses **relevant** content to develop and explore ideas through **most of the work**. | Uses **simple** content to develop ideas in **some parts of the work**. |
| **Genre and Disciplinary Conventions** |

|  |
| --- |
| Clear and consistent organizational pattern and structuring elements; follows formal and informal rules of genre or disciplinary expectations. |

 | Develops **clear** **organization pattern** that flows and is cohesive; **detailed attention** **to and successful execution** of conventions to the assigned task. | Develops **adequate organization pattern** that structures the whole work; **consistent use of conventions** to the assigned task. | Develops **recognizable organization pattern**; **basic use of conventions** to the assigned task. | **Lack of organization pattern**; **no or little use of conventions**. |
| **Control of Syntax and Mechanics** |

|  |
| --- |
| Quality of language use to communicate meaning and control over syntax and mechanics of writing. |

 | Showcases **skillful use of writing** for communication with **clarity** and **fluency**. | Showcases **competent use of writing** for communication with **minor errors**. | Showcases **basic writing skill and command of syntax** with **some errors**. | **Syntax and mechanics errors** that **impedes meaning**. |

**2.4 Findings of Assessment**

As previously mentioned, 4 groups of two-person team were assigned specific papers listed in 2.3 for assessment. The results of each criterion listed in the rubric are presented in Figs 1 to 4, respectively.

**Fig. 1 – Students’ performance in Criterion 1 of Written Communication Rubric: Context of and Purpose of Writing** (Sample size = 154 papers of graduating seniors)

**Fig. 2 – Students’ performance in Criterion 2 of Written Communication Rubric: Content Development** (Sample size = 154 papers of graduating seniors)

**Fig. 3 – Students’ performance in Criterion 3 of Written Communication Rubric: Genre and Disciplinary Conventions** (Sample size = 154 papers of graduating seniors)

**Fig. 4 – Students’ performance in Criterion 4 of Written Communication Rubric: Control of Syntax and Mechanics** (Sample size = 154 papers of graduating seniors)

Fig. 5 shows students’ performance in all four areas of the rubric, comparing them to targeted benchmark for satisfactory performance.

***Criterion 1***

***Criterion 2***

***Criterion 3***

***Criterion 4***

***Percent of students***

*Target benchmark (90%)*

**Fig. 5 – Students’ performance in all four criterion and benchmark of performance.**

The agreement between the two raters (i.e., inter-rater agreement) of each team evaluating a given set of work is high. In all, the inter-rater agreements of competency (i.e., criterion rated 3 and above) or otherwise (i.e., criterion rated 2 or below), for Criterion 1 to 4, are 94.2%, 94.2%, 90.9%, and 95.5%, respectively.

**Chapter 3 – Summary and Conclusions**

In AY2019-20, the Written Communication Core Competency Committee (WCCCC) was tasked with the assessment of written communication skill of undergraduate graduating seniors; Written Communication is one of the five core competencies per WASC Senior Colleges and University Commission’s Standard 2, provision 2.2a.

Eight faculty members representing six different colleges of the University were instrumental in this endeavor. Collectively in AY2019-20, members of WCCCC (i) developed a written communication rubric for assessment, (ii) collected and evaluated sample work of graduating seniors of different UG degree programs of the University, and (iii) prepared this committee’s report, which included findings of the said assessment.

The eight faculty members worked in a team of two to evaluate a given set of collected work using the established rubric, which is modified from the Written Communication VALUE rubric of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU). Specifically, each sample work was evaluated on four distinct criterion: (i) ***Context of and Purpose for Writing***, (ii) ***Content Development***, (iii) ***Genre and Disciplinary Conventions***, and (iv) ***Control of Syntax and Mechanics***. The criterion is rated on a 1-to-4-point scale; with 4 being “exemplary” and 1 being “beginning”. Proficiency was deemed achieved if a criterion is rated 3 or better, and with the expectation that 90% or more of students’ work would be proficient.

From the over 150 papers evaluated, the Committee

* Awarded 86.4% of the collected papers a rating of 3 or better for **Criterion 1 -** ***Context of and Purpose for Writing***.
* Awarded 85.2% of the collected papers a rating of 3 or better for **Criterion 2 -** ***Content Development***.
* Awarded 85.7% of the collected papers a rating of 3 or better for **Criterion 3 -** ***Genre and Disciplinary Conventions***.
* Awarded 92.2% of the collected papers a rating of 3 or better for **Criterion 4 -** ***Control of Syntax and Mechanics***.

Based on the benchmark established for satisfactory performance, only one of the four criterion – Criterion 4 – met the expectation. Notwithstanding of the criterion that failed slightly short of Committee’s expectation, all the graduating seniors are deemed to possess adequate skills in expressing their ideas via writing.

1. Dr. Ching Chiaw Choo is also the Assessment Coordinator of the Lyles College of Engineering, CSU Fresno [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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