

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT**  
**General Education Goal: Writing Effectiveness in the Core Curriculum**  
**Summer 2004 Pilot Assessment**

*Subcommittee Members:*

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**I. Description of the Outcomes that Define the Goal.**

As approved by the Georgia State University Undergraduate Council (1/30/04) and the University Senate (2/13/04), Goal I.1 of the University's General Education Goals states, "Students communicate effectively using appropriate writing conventions and formats."

The Assessment Team recognizes and understands the inherent complexity of writing assessment. There is an impressive multidisciplinary literature that testifies to the enormity and vulnerabilities of any assessment program (cf., Cooper and Odell, 1977; Jones et al., 1995; Godshalk 1966). Indeed, we are confronted immediately by twin concerns: (1) How is it possible to assess written work across disciplines without common assignment parameters? and (2) How can we apply a single set of criteria to judge written work regardless of discipline?

Mindful of these concerns, the Assessment Team nevertheless believes that writing effectiveness is amenable to measurement and that the University is ultimately accountable for undergraduate student achievement in this area. As such, the Team proposed and implemented a pilot plan for systematic assessment of (1) the prominence given to writing effectiveness by instructors teaching courses in the General Education core and (2) how well courses in the General Education core are actually achieving Goal I.1. The proposal recommended administration of a pilot assessment in select Summer 2004 courses, to be followed by a wider assessment project in Fall 2004. Upon completion of the summer pilot the Assessment Team finds inherent value, first, in the self-conscious introspection that comes with any assessment exercise. Generating faculty awareness of – and discussion about – the goal of student communication through effective writing is productive (albeit not always easy) in and of itself. The Team finds value, second, in identifying the methodological possibilities and impediments to the assessment of student writing at Georgia State University, the existence of which became apparent through the summer pilot. Third, the Assessment Team is hopeful that the project – once complete – will provide findings that can and will form the basis for suggested changes to procedures, resource allocation, and/or curriculum.

*What is Writing Effectiveness?*

For purposes of establishing a baseline, we adopt the following broad definition of writing effectiveness:

*Effectiveness* is defined as the ability to write with a clear purpose, appropriate organization, sufficient detail or evidence, appropriate tone, and the proper use of mechanics. Effective communication through writing also entails the ability to summarize and document sources, to write intelligently about topics without quoting sources extensively, and to construct concise statements, arguments, or theories.

This working definition of goal-related outcomes is generally consistent with the “measurable outcomes” for Goal I identified by the University Senate on 3/22/01  
<http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwapa/goalsassessmentofgeneraleducation.html>

According to the Senate-approved guidelines, to demonstrate writing as a tool for effective communication we can look for and assess:

- statements of purpose
- integration of ideas into a larger body of knowledge
- clarity of organization
- quality of argument
- proper use of documentation
- coherence
- subject mastery
- levels of formality
- learning through sequential drafts

The Assessment Team recognizes also that writing is a context-driven activity. Students write for particular audiences and for particular purposes. As such, writing assessment has to be discipline-sensitive. While broad performance categories may be identified, successful writing in one discipline may be distinct in some facets from that in another discipline. The task of identifying outcomes that define the goal of effective writing is, by necessity, a search for least common denominators—broad elements that should be observable at satisfactory levels in all writing. Among these are:

*Content*—inclusion of ideas, facts, and arguments relevant to the assignment;

*Organization*—ordering and connection of ideas, facts, and arguments;

*Reasoning*—logical development of ideas and arguments;

*Rhetoric*—expression of ideas, facts, and arguments in a manner appropriate for the situation;

*Disciplinarity*—expression of ideas, facts, and arguments in a manner appropriate for the discipline;

*Conventions*—presentation of ideas, facts, and arguments according to the conventions of standard written English.

Constructing reliable and valid measures of these goal-related outcomes constituted one of the challenges of the assessment process in Summer 2004. Disciplinarity, in particular, confounded several members of the assessment team—how effectively can a faculty member in Women’s Studies gauge disciplinary appropriateness of student writing in Political Science courses, and vice versa?

## **II. Description of the ways in which courses to be assessed contribute to this goal.**

Across the University’s core curriculum, there are 30 courses from 13 departments that are self-identified by those respective departments as contributing directly to Goal I.1. These are:

*Area A (Essential Skills)*

Engl 1101, 1102

Math 1101, 1220, 2212, 2215, 2211, 2420

*Area B (Institutional Options)*  
Phil 1010

*Area C (Humanities and Fine Arts)*  
Engl 2210, 2120, 2130  
Phil 2010  
Spch 2050  
Film 2700  
Thea 2040  
ForL 1002, 2001, 2002

*Area D (Science, Mathematics, and Technology)*  
Geol 1121, 2001  
CSc 1010  
Math 1070, 1220, 2420

*Area E (Social Sciences)*  
Hist 1111, 1112, 2110  
Pols 1101, 2401  
Econ 2100  
WSt 2010

For purposes of the pilot assessment project conducted in Summer 2004, we selected a sample of four courses from three of the above named departments. Of course, research on writing effectiveness focuses disproportionately on how students learn to write in first-year writing and composition classes. Much less effort has, however, been devoted to writing performance outside of English departments in what are traditionally deemed "content" courses. With this deficiency in mind, we sampled from courses in Political Science, History, and Women's Studies. The courses are deliberately chosen to sample from both high-enrollment and low-enrollment courses in the core's Area E (Social Sciences). The frequency, length, and quality of writing in high-enrollment/large section courses (120-200 students) are likely to be considerably different than what would be found in low-enrollment/small section courses (< 45 students) and ideally we would like to be able to test for differences. In administering the pilot assessment, we limited the sample to courses in a single area (Social Sciences); clearly, the challenge of assessing across all the respective areas of the core will remain. It is hoped, however, that refinement of an assessment tool will be facilitated by the scrutiny of a manageable, initial sample rather than confounded at the outset by excessive breadth.

The following courses constituted the target sample for our pilot assessment:

**POLS 1101 American Government**

This introduction to American politics and government is a high-enrollment course, capturing an effective snapshot of undergraduates from across the University's fields of study. During the period 2002-2004, this course ranked second among all core courses in terms of total enrollment (10,224). More than half of the students in POLS 1101 are Freshmen. There are six sections of the course offered in Summer 2004, each with enrollments as large as 60 students. In Fall and Spring semesters the course has multiple sections of up to 200 students, making this course representative of the challenges faced by instructors (many of whom are untenured junior faculty or graduate student instructors) attempting to achieve General Education goals in large classes. Assessing the class size-learning outcomes relationship should provide some indication of the need for additional graduate student assistance.

### **POLS 2401 Global Issues**

Like POLS 1101, POLS 2401 Global Issues attracts a multidisciplinary student audience. Like POLS 1101 the class sections can be large (120 students), but unlike its counterparts Global Issues is a mid-range enrollment course (4,630 students in fiscal 2002-2004). POLS 2401 also distinguishes itself by having participated actively in the University's Writing Across the Curriculum program. Instructors often require students to write for a range of purposes—e.g., issue background papers, advisory policy memos, and argumentative opinion/editorial type essays. WebCT has been used effectively as a means of peer review and incorporation of instructor feedback on sequential drafts. There are three sections of this course offered in Summer 2004. These sections will be 48 to 56 students in size. Written assignments will include a substantial group project in which groups of 8-10 students will collaborate on preparing a written report. Each student will be writing a specified section of the report. There will also be a second writing assignment in the form of an argumentative piece in favor of or against a policy position. Between them these assignments will allow us to assess several different types of writing related skills related to both informative and argumentative writing.

### **WST 2010 Introduction to Women's Studies**

WST 2010 is the entry-level women's studies course at Georgia State University and can be used to fulfill the General Education Requirement in Section E of the Arts and Sciences core curriculum at Georgia State University. Students who take this course may proceed with a Women's Studies major or minor or they may proceed with other disciplinary courses of study with enhanced knowledge of women, gender, and feminism. WST 2010 is a 3-hour course. WST 2010 seeks to meet General Education Goal I.1 in the following ways:

- Fostering written communication through the use of essay exams and multimedia group presentations;
- Fostering collaborative writing through multimedia group presentations
- Students may engage in peer review of written assignments
- Fostering critical thinking in written expression through exposure to critical theory (feminism), interdisciplinary content and methods, and real-world social problem-solving situations
- Incorporation in writing of salient contemporary issues, particularly as they pertain to women, gender, sex and sexuality, feminism/womanism, race, and class.

To assess the degree to which these learning outcomes have been achieved, instructors who teach WST 2010 already use the following methods:

- Course-embedded assessment, including, but not limited to, homework assignments, individual and group projects (written, creative, and technology-based).
- Essay tests, quizzes, and other examinations.
- Portfolio evaluation (such as scrapbooks or research portfolios).
- Students' self-assessment of learning in the course.

There were two sections of this course offered in Summer 2004.

### **HIST 2110 Survey of U.S. History**

During the period 2002-2004, this thematic survey of US history from the country's origins to the

present ranked first among all core courses in terms of total enrollment (10,716). This makes it an ideal—and perhaps indispensable—candidate for us to use in capturing a cross-section of the undergraduate student population and its abilities in the area of writing effectiveness. In accordance with the Department of History’s own articulated core skills required of all students (Historical Mindedness, Multidimensional Analysis, Historical Context, Textual Interpretation, and Presentation), HIST 2110 encourages students to “demonstrate the ability to create, organize, and support in written form an historical thesis or argument” ([http://education.gsu.edu/ctl/outcomes/A&S/History\\_Assessment\\_Plan.htm](http://education.gsu.edu/ctl/outcomes/A&S/History_Assessment_Plan.htm)) This goal is facilitated by the relatively small sections taught. There were nine sections of this course offered in Summer 2004.

### **III. Description of the assessment methods.**

The Assessment Team recognized that there are multiple methods available to evaluate the effectiveness of student writing across multiple disciplines, although none is deemed uniquely or universally accurate. Written work can be assessed (1) by sampling evidence of actual performance, (2) by accumulating evidence of skills self-reported by students, and (3) by relying on evidence of skill-building reported by instructors. Our assessment plan focused predominantly on the first method and third methods; we avoided, at least at this stage of the project, the pursuit of evidence of skills self-reported by students themselves.

We also recognized that writing in the general education core comes in multiple varieties: research papers, essay exams, laboratory reports, online discussion postings, collaborative group reports, book reviews, journals and others. The wide variety of writing types confounds the effort to provide meaningful, comparable assessments across disciplines.

Methodologically, the value of this pilot study was to (1) help determine the ease/difficulty with which faculty members are willing to construct comparable writing assignments that facilitate assessment across sections of the same course, (2) develop valid and reliable scoring criteria, (3) evaluate the time needed to evaluate student writing across the core curriculum.

*Sampling Evidence of Actual Performance.* In relying extensively on sampling evidence of actual student performance in written communication, we made use of subcommittee members teaching the selected courses in Summer 2004. Faculty member Michael Binford taught a section of POLS 1101, Rashid Naim taught two sections of POLS 2401, and Layli Phillips taught a section of WST 2010—each agreed to coordinate our efforts in their respective course area. For purposes of comparison, we enlisted the services of Bob McBath in the Department of History to coordinate evidence of writing effectiveness in HIST 2110. McBath taught HIST 1112, not HIST 2110, in Summer 2004. It was important to avoid having all writing samples come from courses taught directly by members of the Assessment Team, so it was here that McBath’s role seemed crucial.

Our goal was to collect samples of two basic types of writing—*informative writing* (“writing to learn”) and *argumentative/critical writing* (“writing to communicate”) from a random sample of students in each of five course sections. The Assessment Team confirmed prior to the start of the Summer 2004 semester that students in the selected course sections would be submitting evidence of informative writing and argumentative/critical writing. The Team then worked in June and July to devise a scoring guide for evaluating writing samples.

*Evidence of Skill-Building Reported by Instructors.* The Assessment Team collected and evaluated syllabi from every section of the selected courses taught in the regular Summer session, in Maymester 2004, Spring 2004, and Fall 2003. This meant the gathering and inspection of almost 100 syllabi. Here the objectives were to determine:

1. Is any requirement of student written work stipulated in the course syllabus?
2. What type(s) of writing is/are incorporated into the course requirements?
3. What paper lengths are required?
4. Are instructor feedback and/or peer review as part of a process of sequential drafts indicated?
5. What portion of a student's grade weight is determined by effective written communication?

In addition to the collection of course syllabi, the Assessment Team collected assignment details from participating instructors. We recognized that written work is more effectively assessed if the assignment (as worded when given to the student) is provided.

#### **IV. Description of the data collection and analysis procedures.**

We collected a total of 37 samples of student written work to evaluate. All writing samples came from out-of-class assignments of no fewer than 2 pages and no more than 10 pages in length, representing informative as well as argumentative/critical writing. Each participating instructor was asked to randomly select between five and 10 writing assignment samples for collective assessment by the team.

Building upon an established system developed at Kansas State University in that institution's own assessment of writing effectiveness in the General Education core (Smit et al., 2000), the Assessment Team employed a six-point scoring scale, in which a "6" is the highest score and "1" is the lowest (with a score of "0" indicating that the paper could not be evaluated). This scale avoids both a middle score and association with a five-point scale that might be seen as analogous to the A-B-C-D-F grading system.

#### *Scoring Guide for Writing Samples*

When rating the writing sample, the following six different criteria were considered: purpose, content, organization, details/evidence, tone and mechanics.

##### Explanation of criteria:

*Purpose:* The purpose of the writing is stated directly in the first few paragraphs of the writing, or the purpose can be easily inferred from the opening paragraphs.

*Content:* The content of the writing is substantial. The information presented is new and interesting, and it is what is asked for in the assignment. The arguments show a command of the issues and present relevant evidence and clearly thought out reasoning.

*Organization:* The organization, form, or structure of the writing is clear, easy to follow and appropriate to the genre of writing. Generally, the beginning of the writing sets up expectations that the rest of the writing meets. Transitions from idea to idea and leaps of thought are clearly indicated.

*Details/Evidence:* The writing is well developed and shows a solid grasp of the type of evidence and level of detail needed for the assignment. The information is accurate and appropriate. The arguments are complete, logical and convincing.

*Tone:* The language is appropriate for the intended audience or type of discourse.

*Mechanics:* The mechanics should be appropriate for the writer's purpose and the audience.

Mechanics often include:

Diction: Appropriate choice of words for the purpose, audience and genre.

Sentence Structure: Sentences should be grammatical unless there is a reasonable stylistic reason for using an alternative structure.

Punctuation: Punctuation should follow the general rules for the genre or writing style of the piece.

Usage: The writer should use the tense that is appropriate for the genre and context. First person may be used in some types of writing while third person may be more appropriate in others. Whether the active or passive style is used depends on the document.

**6 The writing is excellent overall.**

Purpose: the purpose of the writing is stated directly in the first few paragraphs of the writing, or the purpose can be easily inferred from the opening paragraphs.

Content: The content of the writing is substantial. The information presented is new and interesting, and it is what is asked for in the assignment. The arguments show a command of the issues and present relevant evidence and clearly thought out reasoning.

Organization: The organization, form, or structure of the writing is clear and very easy to follow. The beginning of the writing sets up expectations that the rest of the writing meets. Transitions from idea to idea and leaps of thought are clearly indicated.

Details/Evidence: The writing is well developed and shows a solid grasp of the type of evidence and level of detail needed for the assignment. The information is accurate and appropriate. The arguments are convincing.

Tone: The language is appropriate for the intended audience or type of discourse.

**5 The writing is very good overall.**

It is similar to writing rated "6." The purpose of the writing is fairly easy to determine but may not be explicitly stated or found in the first couple paragraphs. Writing demonstrates the author's ability to present clear information and fully developed arguments. However, the writing may occasionally lack sufficient detail or evidence. There is some form of organization or structure but at times it may be somewhat difficult to follow. The writing is generally appropriate for the type of assignment and intended audience but may occasionally be slightly off target.

**4 The writing is good overall.**

The writing is competent and has more strengths than weaknesses. However, quality may be uneven and may consistently have one or two problems. The purpose of writing may be fuzzy. The content should generally provide adequate information but this may be presented in a conventional or uninteresting way. Some level of organization is attempted but the writing occasionally goes off track or becomes difficult to follow. Sufficient details and evidence for an argument should be present but irrelevant information may be included or the argument may be unconvincing as a whole. The writing may at times call into question the writer's command of the material or

understanding of the audience or genre.

**3 The writing is fair overall.**

It is similar to writing rated "4." However, several problems may consistently occur. The purpose of the piece may be unclear. Although the writing provides some appropriate information, there is also a substantial amount of irrelevant or uninteresting content. The writing may be underdeveloped and not follow a clearly defined structure. An argument may be presented, with some supporting evidence, but the level of detail is insufficient or the reasoning appears flawed. The writing raises consistent questions about the writer's command of the material or understanding of the audience or genre.

**2 The writing is weak overall.**

The writing clearly has more weaknesses than strengths. The writing may indicate some purpose or demonstrate a minimal level of organization. However, overall the writing seems pointless and simply a mechanical response to an assignment. Any arguments are unconvincing and the writing does not appear to know how to use evidence or reasoning to support the arguments. The writing seriously calls into question the writer's command of the material or understanding of the audience or genre.

**1 The writing is poor overall.**

This writing lacks the occasional good points of a "2." The writing seems completely pointless or unrelated to the assignment. The content appears to be a random collection of facts or ideas without any clear connections or organization. Arguments that are presented lack any evidence or reasoning and seem unrelated to any purpose or audience. The writing demonstrates no sense that the writer understands the material, the audience, or the genre. The writing is so formulaic and undeveloped that it seems as if the writer put it together with little thought or effort.

**0 The writing does not fit the requirements and cannot be assessed.**

It may, for example, be plagiarized or contain a kind of writing not called for in the project description.

## V. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM SUMMER PILOT

### *Syllabi Collection.*

Our scrutiny of 96 course syllabi from Fall 2003-Summer 2004 produced some important nuggets of discovery [See Tables 1 and 2]. First, we find that approximately two-thirds of all sections of these core curriculum courses actually did formalize a writing requirement in the course syllabus. Whether the remaining one-third that make no reference to student writing represent a significant concern is open for debate; what is quite clear, however, is that there are real discrepancies across courses. Whereas 83% of all HIST 2110 sections specify student writing in the syllabus, only 38% of POLS 1101 syllabi do the same. This would seem to beg the real question as to the effects of large class size (120 and 200 in POLS 1101) on the instructor's decision about whether to assign any written work. Follow-up discussion with faculty instructors reveals a significant apprehension about the costs of trying to achieve the goal of effective written communication—here the mentality is often one of avoiding writing assignments and resorting to fill-in-the-bubble multiple choice exams because of inadequate graduate teaching assistance and the distraction such an investment would give to the publication-driven pressures of promotion and tenure. It is instructive to note here that instructors in POLS 2401 Global Issues have more frequently made use of Writing Across the Curriculum resources (e.g., the addition of an additional graduate student to the classroom as a Writing Consultant) and therefore

demonstrated some effectiveness at juggling large class size with the demands of meeting Gen. Ed. Goal I.1.

Also emerging out of our study of these syllabi are concerns about multiple writing assignments. Ideally, student writing improves with faculty and even peer feedback. If students are writing only a single paper in a semester (and we know from experience that many papers are due at the end of the semester, only to find the vast majority of students never pick up their papers and their professor's comments), then a significant opportunity to advance writing effectiveness is missed. With this in mind, our Assessment Team notes that only a quarter of the syllabi surveyed provide for more than one writing assignment.

We also note that expectations of student writing take many different forms and lengths—from 5-8 sentences at one end of the spectrum to 15 pages at the other. We further note that the importance attached to writing—at least as measured by grade weight—ranges significantly from 3% of the final course grade to 75%. Finally, we observe that less than half of the syllabi examined indicate the existence of an essay component in the course exam.

If the goal is to have 100% of the classes in these core courses formally contributing to student achievement in the area of writing effectiveness, then these preliminary data suggest that the goal has not yet been met...at least in the area of writing frequency. The Assessment Team recognizes the need to further investigate these data for their relationship with class size, instructor status, WAC support, previous teaching experience, and the use of WebCT.

#### *Assessment of Writing Quality.*

Evaluations of samples of student writing likewise revealed important elements of both the process and the product of assessment. As Table 3 indicates, four members of the Assessment Team reviewed at 32 papers. All team members reviewed an additional five papers. Missing from our dataset and from the review process—at least at the time of this report—are the writing samples from HIST 2110. This fact highlights some of the difficulties of coordinating assessment across multiple departments and during the summer session, when some faculty members become less accessible.

Despite the absence of HIST 2110 papers, the assessment group was able to read and score enough student writing samples to effectively gauge the merits of the evaluation rubric and to draw attention to additional methodological issues for future assessment. On five papers, the entire committee assigned the exact same score. On an additional 14 papers, all scores were within one point of each other. In the case of only one paper did all the evaluators assign different scores. While the Assessment Team wishes to continue refining the scoring rubric, the summer pilot gives us reasonable confidence that the current approach has some merit.

While not yet aspiring to statistical significance with this small, exploratory assessment of writing samples, we still take note that the average score for these papers is a rather modest 3.7. This means that the writing evaluated this summer lies somewhere between “fair” and “good.” Perhaps it lies beyond the remit of this committee to derive targets from the data, but it is our belief that the average score for our students should be *at least* 4.0 “good.”

#### **VI. How Results Will Be Used.**

The Assessment Team will meet in September to consider revisions and refinements for the larger

assessment project to be administered in the Fall 2004 semester. Upon completion of the Fall semester assessment project, a full set of recommendations regarding procedural and curricular changes and resource needs will be provided to the Provost, GEA Chair, and departmental chairs. The recommendations will also be posted on the Center for Teaching and Learning website.

## REFERENCES

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Godshalk, Fred I., Francis Swineford, and William E. Coffman. *The Measurement of Writing Ability*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1966.

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**TABLE 2.**  
**PROMINENCE OF STUDENT WRITING IN SYLLABI FROM SELECT CORE CURRICULUM COURSES**  
**FALL 2003-SUMMER 2004**  
**(% INDICATING)**

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>FORMAL WRITING REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>NO FORMAL WRITING REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>OPTIONAL WRITING REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>MULTIPLE WRITING REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>ESSAY EXAMS</b>	<b>NO ESSAY EXAMS</b>	<b>OPTIONAL ESSAY EXAMS</b>	<b>N</b>
POLS 1101	38	47	15	15	24	32	6	34
POLS 2401	78	15	0	30	48	26	0	23
HIST 2110	83	11	6	33	56	11	0	36
WST 2010	100	0	0	100	100	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>96</b>

**TABLE 3. EVALUATION OF WRITING SAMPLES  
SUMMER PILOT, 2004**

	Assessor A	Assessor B	Assessor C	Assessor D	Assessor E	Avg.
Sample 1	6	5	5	6	5	5.40
Sample 2	5	5	3	5	5	4.60
Sample 3	4	4	4	4	4	4.00
Sample 4	3	4	2	3	3	3.00
Sample 5	2	2	3	3	2	2.40
Sample 6	3	4	5	3		3.75
Sample 7	5	5	4	4		4.50
Sample 8	5	5	3	4		4.25
Sample 9	2	3	4	2		2.75
Sample 10	3	4	2	2		2.75
Sample 11	4	5	2	3		3.50
Sample 12	3	4	3	3		3.25
Sample 13	2	3	3	2		2.50
Sample 14	2	4	4	2		3.00
Sample 15	4	4	4	4		4.00
Sample 16	3	5	4	3		3.75
Sample 17	6	6	5	5		5.50
Sample 18	4	5	4	4		4.25
Sample 19	3	4	3	3		3.25
Sample 20	4	5	6	3		4.50
Sample 21	3	4	5	3		3.75
Sample 22	4	3	2	3		3.00
Sample 23	3	3	5	3		3.50
Sample 24	2	3	4	2		2.75
Sample 25	6	6	5	5		5.50
Sample 26	3	5	5	4		4.25
Sample 27	5	4	5	4		4.50
Sample 28	4	4	4	4		4.00
Sample 29	4	3	4	3		3.50
Sample 30	5	4	3	4		4.00
Sample 31	6	6	3	5		5.00
Sample 32	3	3	3	3		3.00
Sample 33	3	3	3	3		3.00
Sample 34	4	3	3	3		3.25
Sample 35	5	4	4	4		4.25
Sample 36	4	3	3	3		3.25
Sample 37	5	4	4	4		4.25

**Overall average score: 3.77** [i.e., less than “good” and somewhat better than “fair”]

**4.00 (Good):** Writing is competent and has more strengths than weaknesses; however, quality may be uneven and may consistently have one or two problems. The purpose of writing may be fuzzy. The content generally provides adequate information but this may be presented in a conventional or uninteresting way. Some level of organization is attempted but the writing occasionally goes off track or becomes difficult to follow. Sufficient details and evidence for an argument are present but irrelevant information may be included or the argument may be unconvincing as a whole. The writing may at times call into question the writer's command of the material or understanding of the audience or genre.

**3.00 (Fair):** It is similar to writing rated "4." However, more problems consistently occur. The purpose of the writing is often unclear. Although the writing provides some appropriate information, there is also a substantial amount of irrelevant or uninteresting content. The writing may be underdeveloped and not follow a clearly defined structure. Arguments are presented with some supporting evidence, but the level of detail is insufficient or the reasoning appears flawed. The writing raises consistent questions about the writer's command of the material or understanding of the audience or genre.