

Assessment Report — Writing Level 2 Capacity Committee
May 31, 2023

Summary. During 2022-2023 the Writing Level 2 Capacity Committee assessed student learning of the upper-level writing skills involved in the Writing Level 2 capacity as currently defined in the Faculty Handbook. Allison Shutt, Chris Camfield, and Hope Coulter were the members of this committee. We worked by email for most of the year and met twice face-to-face:

- January 30, 2023, 4:10-5:00 p.m. over Teams—Allison Shutt, Chris Camfield, Hope Coulter, and Associate Provost David Sutherland;
- May 18, 2023, 10:00-10:50 at the Murphy House—Allison Shutt, Chris Camfield, Hope Coulter.

Evidence Collected—Direct Assessment. For direct assessment, we asked faculty to categorize students in their W2 courses according to levels of mastery of the four W2 learning goals. This year our direct assessment focus was Learning Goal 4, which relates to audience-appropriate diction and sentence structure. We honed in on the LG4 results in this year’s report and also looked back at previous semesters’ responses about LG4.

Note: The old pdf document “[AS-CC-W2-Cycle](#)” was hard to read because the columns do not align. We reformatted this as a spreadsheet by the same name, “[AS-CC-W2-Cycle.xlsx](#),” for clarity.

In 2022-2023, 63 W2 courses were taught, and we received data from 56 of them, or 89%. (One course, Dr. Jenn Dearolf’s Biology 335, will not conclude until after the class trip to Belize this summer; we granted an extension till July 31 for her to complete her W2 assessment of those 13 students. We will add her results to the cumulative spreadsheet.) The total collection of data included 527 students, broken out as follows:

Learning Goal 4: W2 courses help students to improve their diction and use fairly sophisticated sentence structure. A W2 student learns to choose appropriate words for the assigned audience and topic.

	Strong	Satisfactory	Needs Growth	Unsatisfactory	N/A
Fall 2022	117	74	24	8	23
Spring 2023	104	75	26	6	70

Instructors were told to indicate students as N/A if they were not taking the course for W2 credit. After excluding the N/A students, we see that 85% of students were classified as either strong or

satisfactory by their instructors in regard to writing a thesis statement. This trend is borne out when we combine this year's results with previous years:

2020 2S – 2022 2S (five semesters)

Learning Goal 4: W2 courses help students to improve their diction and use fairly sophisticated sentence structure. A W2 student learns to choose appropriate words for the assigned audience and topic.

Strong: 395 (51%)

Satisfactory: 257 (33%)

Needs Growth: 108 (14%)

Unsatisfactory: 19 (2%)

Total: 779

(Not Applicable was marked 150 times, and those are excluded from the total.)

Thus, 84% of respondents rated their students as demonstrating either “strong” or “satisfactory” use of appropriate diction and effective sentence structure—the top two categories. We consider this an indication that W2 courses are succeeding in achieving this goal.

Going forward, we would like to improve the feedback response rate from instructors. It is important for us to hear from every instructor about their W2 courses. The website now allows us to see which faculty members have completed the assessment and which have not, so shortly after the deadline each semester we could reach out with individual reminders.

Evidence Collected—Indirect Assessment. For indirect assessment, we used course feedback surveys to query students in W2 courses about all four W2 learning goals. As with direct assessment, our goal of focus was LG4:

This course improved my ability to use appropriate diction and vocabulary and to structure sentences effectively for my intended audience. [Agree/Disagree on a scale of 1-5.]

We received responses from 334 students across the two semesters, distributed as follows:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Fall 2022	81	43	11	2	3
Spring 2023	116	56	16	5	1

Strongly Agree: 197 (59%)

Agree: 99 (30%)

Neither agree nor disagree: 27 (8%)

Disagree: 7 (2%)

Strongly Disagree: 4 (1%)

Total: 334

Evidently, an overwhelming majority of respondents—89%—either agree or strongly agree that their W2 course helped them to use effective diction, vocabulary, and sentence structure. It is encouraging that students recognize growth in this area as a result of their W2 experience at Hendrix.

In summary, the top two boxes were marked over 80% of the time for both direct and indirect assessment of Learning Goal 4, providing some evidence that both instructors and students feel we are meeting this learning goal.

Plans for Evidence-Based Change. Although our W2 assessment plan and implementation is still a work in progress, we do feel that we have established a working method for gathering the assessment data. We now have a revised SAP, a focus sequence that follows the prescribed cycle, and the necessary technological supports in place to capture and analyze the results in a timely fashion (tasks 1-5 from last year's report). Task 6, which involves communicating with W2 instructors at the beginning of each semester, remains to be done:

--Alert W2 faculty at the beginning of each semester to (1) remind them about this capacity and its learning goals; (2) urge them to be specific in talking with their students about these goals; and (3) remind them that we'll be asking them to fill out their own direct assessment surveys at the end of the semester and we very much need their compliance. This will help students be more mindful of their writing development over the course of the semester and be better prepared for the W2 questions on their course feedback surveys. We also hope it will boost the direct assessment response rate among W2 faculty.

The committee chair will make a point to send this email in August.

The final task named in last year's report was:

--Work with the Assessment Office and Academic Affairs to set a timeline and procedures for moving forward with the broader conversations about W2 among the faculty.

The new provost to be hired, along with the incoming president, will doubtless be working with faculty to set priorities for matters that need faculty-wide attention. Whenever the faculty does turn its attention to a comprehensive review of W2, there are a number of issues to consider, some pedagogical, some structural and logistical. For example, this year, after talking with the Associate Provost, this committee decided to recommend that the C-or-better "super-requirement" be dropped from W2. At their April 6, 2023, meeting, the Council on Academic Policy decided "not to bring this proposal to the faculty at the current time. It was felt that the complexity of the issue is such that there was insufficient time in the remaining two faculty meetings to do it justice. The proposal will likely not come to the faculty in the fall, either, but will become part of larger conversations regarding our current general education curriculum."

Once the faculty is ready to turn to a review of the Writing 2 Capacity, we recommend repeating the survey we administered in 2020 in order to get a fresh snapshot of faculty opinion on these issues.

We look forward to addressing these matters in our ongoing assessment of the W2 capacity.

Respectfully submitted,

The Writing Level II Capacity Committee

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Allison Shutt, Professor of History