

Writing Across the Curriculum

2017-18 Summary of Progress in Assessing Writing Level-1 Courses

Given that the English Department teaches the entirety of the Writing Level-1 (W1) courses, the assessment plan for W1 neatly aligns with the English Department's own practices in assessing its courses and in making modifications based on data gathered through these assessments.

In recent years, the English department has benefited from a Mellon grant to consider new forms of writing pedagogy. In 2016-17, English department faculty extended these conversations by drafting a new rubric to guide course development and assess student learning in W1 courses. In 2017-18, faculty members beta-tested the rubric in their classes in different forms; several of us have used it to directly assess student learning in English 110 and 200-level courses and have incorporated it into our course learning goals; one of us has also had students directly assess their own learning to the rubric as well.

We also have an ongoing English 110 Working Group, which met three times in Spring 2018 to discuss the general overview and structure of our 110 sections, to discuss specific assignments, and to discuss specific students who exemplify typical learning trajectories through the course.

The department plans to make a few refinements to the rubric this summer and to use this new version of the W1 rubric to assess all students in W1. Using this shared rubric will allow us to refine our pedagogy and track how our students are developing in our courses. We are hopeful that, by the end of 2018-19, we will have a common question that we can attach to all student evaluations of W1 classes. In 2018-19, we will also explore grant opportunities—for workshops with visiting experts in writing pedagogy—that would help us to strengthen our teaching relative to what our assessment reveals as our weak areas. We remain passionately committed to strengthening the writing capacity of all students, and we work to assess and modify our practices in accordance with what students need and how students learn.