

Validation Report for
Locally Developed ESL Writing Sample
at Monterey Peninsula College

Background

The English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty at Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) has chosen to use a locally-developed performance assessment for placement into the two ESL writing courses that have prerequisites. The ESL Writing Sample was locally developed in 1993. This performance assessment is approved for use at MPC until June 30, 2007. MPC is submitting this current report to renew approval of the assessment.

This report contains a description of the standardization of the administration and scoring of the ESL writing sample; evidence addressing content validity and consequential validity; evidence supporting the college-established cut scores; investigation of interrater reliability; investigation of disproportionate impact for gender, age, and ethnicity; and a description of the accommodations available for students with disabilities.

The two highest levels of courses in the English as a Second Language (ESL) department have prerequisites. The lower level ESL courses do not have prerequisites. The highest level ESL course, Level 6, is ENGL 1A (Composition and Analytical Reading). The prerequisites are “Qualifying reading and writing assessment results or satisfactory completion of ENGL 111 OR ENSL 110.” The level 5 course, ENSL 110 (Advanced Composition) carries the prerequisites of “ENSL 342; or ENSL 343 and 344; or qualifying assessment result” and “ENSL 155 or qualifying assessment result”. The following ENSL courses do not have prerequisites:

- Level 4 – ENSL 342 (Intensive High-Intermediate Reading, Writing, and Grammar)
- Level 3 – ENSL 330 (Intensive Intermediate English)
- Level 2 – ENSL 320 (Intensive High-Beginning English)
- Level 1 – ENSL 312 (Intensive Beginning English)

The focus of this validation report is ENGL 1A and ENSL 110 because these are the only two courses that have prerequisites.

Standardization of Administration and Scoring: Prompts, Rubrics, Readers, and Scoring

1. Development of Prompts

The prompts were developed informally more than 15 years ago. In 1995, the prompts were studied formally in terms of their validity and reliability. In addition, the cut scores were reviewed and disproportionate impact was examined. Four of these prompts, shown

in Appendix A, were approved for continued use by the Chancellor's Office on February 7, 1995.

2. Rubrics

MPC ESL instructors read the essays and score them on a 6-point scale. The Scoring Guide, presented in Appendix B, is based on holistic reading of ESL placement essays. A committee of ESL grouped scoring criteria into four categories: (1) content, (2) organization and development, (3) vocabulary, and (4) grammar and mechanics.

3. Training of Readers

Training sessions are conducted periodically as new examiners participate in the scoring of the sample. Each new reader receives and reviews a training packet that includes: the primary objectives of each course in the series, descriptions of each course and writing typically seen at each course level, scoring rubric, and sample placement essays for each level.

4. Administration of writing sample

The writing sample is always administered in the same way. The amount of time never varies. The same directions are read, after which any student questions are answered. The prompts are drawn from the same pool. The physical conditions under which the sample is administered are always similar.

5. Scoring

There are two readers who score each essay independently. If the scores match, the placement level is given; if the scores do not match, a third reader does a blind assessment and serves as a tie-breaker. If there is still a discrepancy, the group of readers discusses the essay in light of the placement guidelines until a consensus is reached. Reliability studies conducted for the holistic reading process at MPC show high consistency among the readers of the essays. Reliability will be discussed in greater details later in this report.

Evidence Addressing Content Validity

A content validity study was conducted for the ESL writing sample. All five faculty members of the ESL department were asked to review the course prerequisite skills and the content of the writing prompts to ensure a match.

Faculty first defined the skills taught in the higher level ESL courses--ENGL 1A, ENSL 110, and ENSL 342. (The skills taught in the three lower level courses are not addressed in this report because these courses do not have prerequisites, nor do they serve as

prerequisites for other courses). As an example, the skills taught in ENSL 110 are listed below:

1. *Control of punctuation*
2. *Effective use of subordination and embedding*
3. *Correct use of advanced grammar (e.g., passives, noun clauses, etc).*
4. *Awareness of coherence and transition*
5. *Paragraph development by varied means*
6. *Understanding of essay organization (introduction, thesis, subtopics)*
7. *Understanding of basic research and documentation*
8. *Familiarity with the writing process: prewriting, writing, drafts, editing*

The skills taught in higher level courses build on skills taught in the lower level courses. Specifically, the skills taught in ENSL 342 serve as the pre-skills for the next level course, ENSL 110. Similarly, the skills taught in ENSL 110 are the pre-skills for ENGL 1A. The complete set of skills taught in ENSL 342, ENSL 110, and ENGL 1A is listed in Appendix C.

The next step was for faculty to determine whether the writing solicited by the essay prompts was related to skills taught in ENSL 342 and ENSL 110. Four of the five ESL faculty individually rated the match between the writing prompts and the course prerequisite skills. They used a check mark to indicate a match between each writing prompt and course prerequisite. They then discussed their ratings and arrived at a consensus.

There was an excellent match between the prerequisite skills for ENSL 110 and all four writing prompts. The raters felt that each ENSL 110 prerequisite skill could be assessed through any of the four writing samples. In contrast, there was less of a match for the English 1A prerequisite skills. For example, the raters felt that the skill of understanding basic research and documentation is not tested by the prompts. Similarly, the raters felt that familiarity with the writing process cannot be determined through the writing assessment. The consensus-based set of faculty ratings is shown in Appendix D. Despite these two deficiencies, the raters felt that the writing prompts more than adequately assess the skills required for the higher level ESL courses.

In addition to examining the match between the writing prompts and the course prerequisites, the faculty raters examined the alignment between the rubric score values and the course placements.

Students who receive a score of “6” place into ENGL 1A, the highest level course. At this level the student’s writing is syntactically advanced and relatively free of error. Sophisticated essay organization is evident in the writing, and there is a higher level of paragraph development and cohesion. These skills are addressed in the Scoring Guide in Appendix B.

ENSL 110 is one level below ENGL 1A; it is the “lowest” level ESL course that has a prerequisite. Students who receive a score of “5” on the ESL writing assessment place

into this course. The student at this level makes fewer surface errors but is still be working on developing more sophisticated sentences. There tends to be limited paragraph development and essay organization, and few transitions between ideas.

ENSL 342 does not have a prerequisite, but it is the prerequisite course for ENSL 110. Students who receive a score of “4” on the ESL writing assessment are *recommended for placement* into this course. Students who enter this course initially demonstrate writing with less than adequate development of ideas and little essay organization. Their sentence structure tends to be more rudimentary than complex. In addition, students who enter this course initially exhibit a number of errors of punctuation and surface grammar. These skills are all clearly addressed in the four points of the Scoring Guide for placement in ENSL 342.

Students who receive a score of “3” on the ESL writing assessment are *recommended for placement* into ENSL 330. The student at this level shows a limited level of organization but does not demonstrate use of paragraphs. The writing is syntactically rudimentary and riddled with errors of grammar and punctuation.

Students who receive a score of “2” on the ESL writing assessment are *recommended for placement* into ENSL 320. The writing of students at this level is very limited, both in terms of content, organization, and grammar.

ENSL 312 is the lowest level course. Students who receive a score of “1” on the ESL writing assessment are *recommended for placement* into this course. These students demonstrate no ability to write; or at most, they write just a few words.

Evidence Addressing Consequential Validity

MPC conducted a consequential validity study during spring 2006 and fall 2006. The study sought answers to the following questions posed in the assessment standards:

1. After the first few weeks of a course, how do students who test scores recommend placement into a particular class evaluate the appropriateness and/or usefulness of their placement into that course? (The Standard is at least 75% affirmative endorsement by students).
2. After the first few weeks of a class, how do instructors evaluate the readiness of individual students (those who follow their test performance recommendations) to undertake the material of their class? (The Standard is at least 75% judgment of proper placement by instructors.)

The study asked students and instructors to evaluate their course placements which had been determined using the ESL writing sample. The student questionnaire (see Appendix E) asked students to select one of three statements related to the appropriateness of placement and to indicate how they were placed in the course. Surveys for students who were not placed in their course by the assessment process were excluded from the study.

The instructor questionnaire asked instructors to rate each student’s level of preparedness for the course (see Appendix E). The student and instructor ratings are presented in the tables below.

Instructors felt that 95.6% of the students placed into ENGL 1A (as a result of the placement test) were appropriately placed; instructors felt that only 2 students were placed too low. Similarly, 91.1% of the students placed into ENGL 1A felt they were in the right level course. Only four students (8.9%) felt the course was too easy.

ENGL 1A		Instructor Rating			
		Response 1 (placed too low)	Response 2, 3, 4 (correct placement)	Response 5 (placed too high)	
Student Rating	Response 1 (too difficult)				
	Response 2 (right level)	1	40		91.1%
	Response 3 (too easy)	1	3		8.9%
		4.4%	95.6%		

The results for placement into ENSL 110 were very similar. Instructors felt that 93.4% of the students were placed appropriately and that 6.6% (4 students) were placed too low. Over 85% of students placed felt they were placed at the right level. However, 11.5% of students felt that the course was too easy. Only two students (3.3%) felt the course into which they were placed was too difficult. To summarize, students and instructors, especially instructors, perceived that placement into ESL writing courses was appropriate.

ENSL 110		Instructor Rating			
		Response 1 (placed too low)	Response 2, 3, 4 (correct placement)	Response 5 (placed too high)	
Student Rating	Response 1 (too difficult)		2		3.3%
	Response 2 (right level)	1	51		85.2%
	Response 3 (too easy)	3	4		11.5%
		6.6%	93.4%		

Evidence Supporting Cut Scores

The cut scores were established, as part of an earlier study on the validity of the ESL writing sample as a placement tool into ESL writing courses. A scoring rubric was created by MPC’s ESL faculty to represent each of the levels in ESL writing courses. As explained in a previous section, the two raters must be in agreement, or a third rater serves as a tie-breaker. (The analysis of interrater reliability is discussed in the next section of this report). Thus, the following ratings are used for placement:

Score	Placement
6	ENGL 1A
5	ENSL 110
4*	ENSL 342*
3*	ENSL 330*
2*	ENSL 320*
1*	ENSL 312*

** Student is recommended for placement into a particular level, but there is no prerequisite at this level.*

MPC conducted two different studies to gather empirical evidence of the appropriateness of the cut scores. As discussed in the previous section, in spring 2006 and fall 2006 the ESL faculty conducted a consequential validity study for the two higher level courses that have prerequisites (ENGL 1A and ENSL 110). Depending on the course, 85.2% to 91.1% of students felt that they were placed into the right level course. Similarly, instructors felt that 93.4% to 95.6% of students in their courses were placed at the correct level. These results suggest that the current cut scores are appropriate for the two higher level courses.

As described earlier, the ESL courses below level 5 do not have prerequisites. Students may follow the recommended placement or, in some cases, may choose to enroll in a higher level or lower level course. MPC conducted a criterion validity study to determine the appropriateness of the cut scores for the lower level courses. From spring 2005 through fall 2006, MPC tracked students who took the ESL writing sample and subsequently enrolled in an ESL course. The results are presented in the tables below.

ESL writing sample, Score “4” → Recommended placement: ENSL 342

Course enrolled in:	Successful	Not successful
ENSL 342	29 (81%)	7 (19%)
ENSL 330	12 (100%)	

ESL writing sample, Score “3” → Recommended placement: ENSL 330

Course enrolled in:	Successful	Not successful
ENSL 342	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
ENSL 330	35 (88%)	5 (12%)
ENSL 320	3 (100%)	

ESL writing sample, Score “2” → Recommended placement: ENSL 320

Course enrolled in:	Successful	Not successful
ENSL 330	9 (50%)	9 (50%)
ENSL 320	25 (93%)	2 (7%)
ENSL 320	2 (100%)	

As the first table indicates, 48 students received a score of “4” and were recommended for placement into ENSL 342. Most of these students (36 students) did enroll in the recommended course. Of those 36 students, 29 (81%) successfully completed the course with a grade of “C” or better. The remaining 12 students who received a score of “4” on the ESL writing sample opted for ENSL 330, the level below ENSL 342. All 12 students successfully completed ENSL 330, which is what one would expect.

Forty seven students received a score of “3” on the writing sample and were recommended for placement into ENSL 330. Most of these students (40 students) did enroll in ENSL 330, and 88% succeeded in that course. Three students enrolled in a lower level course, and all 3 succeeded in that course. Four students enrolled in ENSL 342, which is a higher level course than was recommended; two students were successful and the other two students failed to complete the course.

The third table shows the success rates for students who received a score of “2” on the ESL writing sample. The majority of these students followed the recommended placement, and 93% of them successfully completed the recommended ESL course. Eighteen students enrolled in a higher level course; only 50% of those students successfully completed the higher level course. Only two students enrolled in a lower level course; both students were successful in that course.

Results are not presented for students who received a score of “1” on the writing sample because there were too few students at this level to generalize the findings.

Overall, the results of the criterion validity study indicate that students that follow the recommended placement into levels 4 and below are likely to succeed. Students who opt for a higher level course than is recommended only have a 50% chance of success in the higher level course. Students who opted for a lower level course had a 100% chance of success; however, choosing a lower level course than is recommended might delay attainment of one’s educational goal. Thus, the results suggest that the cut scores for the lower level courses are appropriate.

Investigation of Interrater Reliability

As mentioned in a previous section, each student’s essay is read by two readers. The readers are all members of the ESL faculty and have been trained on the scoring rubric described earlier.

We examined the readers’ ratings for the past year to determine interrater reliability. As mentioned in a previous section, a placement level is assigned if the two readers’ scores are identical. If the two readers’ scores do not match, a third reader does a blind assessment and serves as a tie-breaker. The table below shows the agreement among various faculty pairs for three prompts. Overall, there was very high reliability among the readers. The reader pairs gave the same score on 91.8% of the essays and disagreed on the remaining 8.2% of the essays. Reliability was particularly high for readers “A” & “B” on the essays elicited by prompt #1.

Prompt	Readers	Agreements	Dis-Agreements	% agreement	% dis-agreement
1	A & B	20	1	95.2%	4.8%
2	C & D	36	4	90.0%	10.0%
3	A & D	22	2	91.7%	8.3%
	Overall	78	7	91.8%	8.2%

Investigation of Test Bias

The Chancellor’s Office standards (March, 2001) indicate that a new review of test bias is not necessary if the test or course demographics have not changed. A review of the demographics indicates that the demographics of the students who are assessed with the ESL writing sample have not changed. In addition, the ESL department is using the same prompts that were used when the assessment was approved in 2000. Therefore, no additional study of test bias is required at this time. The original study is included in Appendix F.

Investigation of Disproportionate Impact

The ESL writing sample scores from fall 2004 and spring 2005 were categorized by students’ ethnicity, gender, age, and disability status. The percent of students placed into the two courses with prerequisites--ENGL 1A and ENSL 110--was calculated for gender, age, and ethnicity. In addition, we examined the *recommended* placement rates into the lower level courses without prerequisites to provide a basis for comparison. Disproportionate impact, or differential placement rates, was examined using the EEOC 80% rule against the dominant group. The results are presented on the following pages.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR GENDER

ENGL 1A – Composition and Analytical Reading

Gender	N	N placed in ENGL 1A	% placed in ENGL 1A	80% of dominant group	Comments
Male	109	12	11.0%		The female group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group and had the highest placement rate into ENGL 1A. The cutoff standard is 80% * 18.3% (placement rate for dominant group), or 14.7%. Male students placed into this course at a disproportionately lower rate than female students.
Female	218	40	18.3%	14.7%	

ENSL 110 – Advanced Composition

Gender	N	N placed in ENSL 110	% placed in ENSL 110	80% of dominant group	Comments
Male	109	37	33.9%	27.1%	The male group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENSL 110. The cutoff standard is 80% * 33.9%, or 27.1%. More than 27.1% of females placed into ENSL 110; therefore, there is not disproportionate impact for gender for this course.
Female	218	67	30.7%		

ENSL 342 and below

Gender	N	N placed below ENSL 342	% placed below ENSL 342	80% of dominant group	Comments
Male	109	60	55.0%	44.0%	Again, the male group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into the lower level ENSL courses. The cutoff standard is 80% * 55.0%, or 44.0%. More than 44.0% of females placed into the lower level ENSL courses; therefore, there is no disproportionate impact for gender at this level.
Female	218	111	50.7%		

Summary: The results indicate that there was disproportionate impact for gender into the highest level course, ENGL 1A. Female students were more likely to place into this course than male students. This finding is probably the result of a small N, rather than a differential placement rate for males and females. Females in the sample outnumbered males by 2 to 1. In addition, relatively few students place into ENGL 1A, compared to the other courses.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR AGE

ENGL 1A – Composition and Analytical Reading

Age	N	N placed in ENGL 1A	% placed in ENGL 1A	80% of dominant group	Comments
< 19 years	67	10	14.9%		The group age 25 and older was used as the reference group because it had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 1A. The cutoff standard is 80% * 16.5% (placement rate for dominant group), or 13.3%. More than 13.3% of “younger” students placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, there is no disproportionate impact for age for this course
19 – 24 years	94	13	13.8%		
25+ years	163	27	16.5%	13.3%	

ENSL 110 – Advanced Composition

Age	N	N placed in ENSL 110	% placed in ENSL 110	80% of dominant group	Comments
< 19 years	67	27	40.3%	32.3%	The group under age 19 was used as the reference group because it had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENSL 110. The cutoff standard is 80% * 40.3% (placement rate for dominant group), or 32.3%. The “older” students placed into ENSL 110 at lower rates; therefore, there is disproportionate impact for age for this course.
19 – 24 years	94	30	31.9%		
25+ years	163	44	27.0%		

ENSL 342 and below

Age	N	N placed below ENSL 342	% placed below ENSL 342	80% of dominant group	Comments
< 19 years	67	30	44.8%		The group age 25 and older was used as the reference group because it had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into the lower level ENSL courses. The cutoff standard is 80% * 56.4% (placement rate for dominant group), or 45.1%. Less than 45.1% of “younger” students placed into ENSL 342; therefore, there is disproportionate impact for age for the lower level courses.
19 – 24 years	94	51	54.3%		
25+ years	163	92	56.4%	45.1%	

Summary: Students under 19 years appear to place at higher rates than “older” students into ENSL 110, which is one level below transfer level. In a related manner, these “younger” students are not placing into lower level ENSL courses at the same high rate as “older” students. One reason for this finding is that these “younger” students are more likely to be recent high school graduates and thus more likely to have recently completed

writing or reading courses in either English, or their native language. Conversely, “older” students who take the ESL writing assessment at MPC fall into one of two categories: (1) re-entry students who have been out of school for a number of years, or (2) spouses of foreign, nonresidents who are typically proficient in their native language but not in English. This could account for the differential placement rates.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR ETHNICITY

Students who take the placement tests at MPC may indicate one of the following ethnic backgrounds on the assessment form: (1) American Indian/Alaskan Native, (2) Asian, (3) Pacific Islander, (4) Black/not of Hispanic Origin, (5) White/not of Hispanic Origin, (6) Hispanic, (7) Filipino, and (8) Other.

The results from fall 2004 and spring 2005 indicate that the predominant groups were Latino students (36.1%) and Asian students (34.8%). White students represented 13.9% of the students who took the ESL placement test. The remaining 15.2% of students included all other non-white groups. Each of the ethnic minority groups included in this “other non-white” category was too small to draw any meaningful conclusions; thus, the category “other non-white” was excluded from this analysis.

ENGL 1A – Composition

Ethnicity	N	N placed in ENGL 1A	% placed in ENGL 1A	80% of dominant group	Comments
White	44	14	31.8%	25.4%	The white ethnicity group was used as the reference group because it was the group with the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 1A. The cutoff standard is 80% * 31.8%, or 25.4%. Less than 25.4% of Latino and Asian students placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, there is disproportionate impact for this course.
Latino	114	15	13.2%		
Asian	110	13	11.8%		

ENSL 110 – Advanced Composition

Ethnicity	N	N placed in ENSL 110	% placed in ENSL 110	80% of dominant group	Comments
White	44	20	45.4%	36.3%	Again, the white ethnicity group was used as the reference group because it was the group with the highest <i>placement rate</i> . The cutoff standard is 80% * 45.4%, or 36.3%. Less than 36.3% of Latino students placed into ENSL 110; therefore, there is disproportionate impact for this course.
Latino	114	29	25.4%		
Asian	110	43	39.0%		

ENSL 342 and below

Ethnicity	N	N placed below ENSL 342	% placed below ENSL 342	80% of dominant group	Comments
White	44	10	22.7%		The Latino ethnicity group was used as the reference group because it was the group with the highest <i>placement rate</i> into the lower level ENSL courses. The cutoff standard is 80% * 61.4%, or 49.1%. Less than 49.1% of White students placed into the lower level ENSL courses; therefore, there is disproportionate impact.
Latino	114	70	61.4%	49.1%	
Asian	110	54	49.1%		

Summary: White students were more likely to place into ENGL 1A, the highest level course, than Latino and Asian students. Similarly, White students were more likely than Latino students to place into ENSL 110, which is one level below transfer level. Conversely, White students were less likely to place into the lower level ENSL courses, compared to both Latino and Asian students. Latino students placed into the lower level ENSL courses at the highest rate.

The local economy on the Monterey Peninsula is driven to a large degree by tourism and agriculture. Both of these industries pay low wages and both industries rely on migrant workers, particularly from Mexico and Central America. A large segment of the Latino students enrolled in ENSL courses, especially the lower level courses, are from the Oaxaca region in Mexico which has some of the lowest literacy rates in Mexico. The higher placement rates for Latino students into the lower level ENSL courses is probably related to their level of academic preparedness. Thus, there is no great concern that the ESL writing sample, in itself, is causing differential placement rates for Latino students.

Students whose primary language is of Asian origin have a more difficult time learning English than students whose primary language is of Indo-European origin, which

includes most languages in Europe as well as the Indian subcontinent. The reason for this is that most Asian languages are at a greater linguistic distance from English than are the various Indo-European languages. Because it takes native Asian language students longer to acquire English, the Asian students are more likely to place into the lower level ESL courses. There is no great concern that the ESL writing sample, in itself, is causing differential placement rates for Asian students.

The college is addressing the differential achievement and success rates of students. The college recently completed research that indicated that certain minority groups had lower college access rates and lower successful course completion rates. The college recently formed two committees to address recruitment and retention issues, particularly for minority students.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR DISABILITY

In fall 2004 and spring 2005, there were 292 students who took the ESL writing assessment and who indicated their disability status. Only five of these students indicated that they have a learning disability. There were too few students to conduct a meaningful analysis of disproportionate impact for disability. It should be pointed out that MPC does make accommodations for students with disabilities, as described in the next section.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who need special testing accommodations for ESL writing assessments (as well as English reading and writing assessments) are asked to contact the college's Supportive Services department to make arrangements for accommodation. Once the student has been verified as having a disability, a Supportive Services faculty member completes a test accommodation verification form. This form indicates the types of testing accommodations, such as extended time or testing in a distraction reduced environment, that a student may require outside the regular timed testing.

APPENDIX A: WRITING PROMPTS

1. Imagine you are a newspaper reporter. What famous person would you like to interview? Why? What would you ask this person?
2. Is television good or bad for children? Explain why you think as you do.
3. What will your life be ten years from now? (You might want to discuss your work, family, problems and successes.)
4. In the United States, the average person is about 23 years old when he or she gets married. Some people think this is too young. Others think this is too old. In your opinion, what is the best age for marriage? Why do you think so?

APPENDIX B: SCORING GUIDE

STANDARDS FOR HOLISTIC READING OF ESL PLACEMENT ESSAYS

Score: 6 → ENSL 1A

CONTENT

Sophisticated, college-level ideas; familiarity with manipulating ideas – examining, developing, arguing, supporting them. Signs of good general knowledge, both cultural and academic.

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Basic organization largely mastered. Sufficient support succinctly given. Ideas and terms adequately explained and defined. Clear logical sequence both within and between paragraphs; effective use of transition and cohesion. Good introduction and conclusion.

VOCABULARY

Has lexical resources to choose the right word, to pay attention, perhaps to connotation and shades of meaning. May be idiomatic. Comfortable with academic register.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Both simple and complex structures relatively error-free. Employs a greater variety of structures, giving the impression of grammatical ease. Style effective as well as correct. Nearly error-free punctuation and spelling.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 5 → ENSL 110

CONTENT

English adequate to the expression and perhaps exploration of more complicated ideas. May develop an idea in some depth or stay on the level of conventional ideas. Usually shows some academic background, such as high school, here or in own country.

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Clear familiarity with academic organization (such as paragraphing and topic sentences). Examples usually sufficient; ideas and terms adequately explained, perhaps not adequately. Awareness of audience. Transition and cohesion may be weak.

VOCABULARY

Good vocabulary, if nothing fancy. Finds a way to say what he/she means. Knows difference between formal and informal English. Still better at expressing basic meanings rather than shades of meaning; writing competent rather than idiomatic.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Simple structures relatively error-free. Uses more complex structures, still making errors. Many more advanced structures still not present, unknown or avoided. Good punctuation, though there are still some run-ons. Good spelling.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 4 → ENSL 342

CONTENT

Has enough English to deal with the prompt but the ideas are typically underdeveloped and unexplored. This may be because of linguistic constraints; or a weak academic background may be a factor.

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Organization may be loose but the main ideas do stand out. Some notion of paragraphing. May use examples or explain some ideas. Sequencing should be logical; may wander off topic.

VOCABULARY

Can usually manage to say what he/she means; some ability with circumlocution. But writer has little room to maneuver. Questions of diction, register, etc., are not yet relevant.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Continuing, but less pervasive, grammar problems. Grammar does not usually obscure meaning. Typical sentence length 10-14 words. Complex structures still present real problems. Punctuation still a problem. Spelling usually better.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 3 → ENSL 330

CONTENT

Understands prompt and tries to answer it, but can only say what he/she knows how to say—which severely limits relevance. Can write more than student at preceding level.

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

May show rudimentary organization; may, for example, divide answer into parts or give examples. But organization/development, if present at all, is weak and of secondary importance – the real problems being grammatical, lexical.

VOCABULARY

May know a fair number of words, often colloquial and reflecting personal experience. May use them incorrectly; no range or variety; little successful use of circumlocution.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Writing communicates. Sentences typically 8-12 words in length. Every type of grammar/syntax error. Little success with embedding and subordination, even if attempted. Punctuation present but weak; sentence boundary problems. May be serious problems in spelling.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 2 → ENSL 320

CONTENT

Unable to address prompt in any meaningful way; may not understand it; may write on something else; may write nothing, or very little.

ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Nothing to speak of.

VOCABULARY

Uses whatever words he/she may have; severely limited.

GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Almost no mastery of sentence construction or punctuation.

Score: 1 → ENSL 312

Essay indicates that the student has no ability to write or write just a few words.

APPENDIX C: LIST OF SKILLS TAUGHT IN COURSES

CLASS: ENSL 342 – Intensive High-Intermediate Reading, Writing and Grammar

1. Control of sentence boundaries.
2. Control of independent and coordinate clauses.
3. Adequate control of basic grammar (e.g., verb tense, singular/plural, etc.).
4. Use of topic sentences.
5. Basic understanding of explanation/analysis.
6. Use of examples/specifics.

CLASS: ENSL 110 – Advanced Composition

1. Control of punctuation.
2. Effective use of subordination and embedding.
3. Correct use of advanced grammar (e.g., passives, noun clauses, etc.).
4. Awareness of coherence and transition.
5. Paragraph development by varied means.
6. Understanding of essay organization.
7. Understanding of basic research and documentation.
6. Familiarity with the writing process: prewriting, writing drafts, editing.

CLASS: ENGLISH 1A – Composition and Analytical Reading

1. Writing coherently organized 500-1500 word essays that logically develop a thesis with supporting ideas and concrete details.
2. Writing focused impromptu papers of at least 500 words in responding to class texts.
3. Writing papers using secondary source material, incorporating parenthetical citation and works cited.
4. Writing papers demonstrating critical thinking and analysis.

APPENDIX D: CONTENT VALIDITY – INSTRUCTOR RATINGS

Course	Prerequisite Skills	Is writing solicited by prompts related to course prerequisite skills?			
		1	2	3	4
ENGL 1A	<i>(These skills are taught in <u>ENSL 110</u>)</i>				
	1. Control of punctuation	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2. Effective use of subordination and embedding	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3. Correct use of advanced grammar (e.g., passives, noun clauses, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4. Awareness of coherence and transition	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5. Paragraph development by varied means	✓	✓	✓	✓
	6. Understanding of essay organization (introduction, thesis, subtopics)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	7. Understanding of basic research and documentation				
8. Familiarity with the writing process: prewriting, writing drafts, editing					
ENSL 110	<i>(These skills are taught in <u>ENSL 342</u>)</i>				
	1. Control of sentence boundaries	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2. Control of independent and coordinate clauses	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3. Adequate control of basic grammar (e.g., verb tense, singular/plural, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4. Use of topic sentences	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5. Basic understanding of explanation/analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Use of examples/specifics	✓	✓	✓	✓	

APPENDIX E: CONSEQUENTIAL VALIDITY

DIRECTIONS TO INSTRUCTORS FOR FILLING OUT RATING ROSTERS

Please rate each student on a scale of 1 to 5 (see below) in terms of how appropriately the student was placed in your class. Write the number next to each student's name. (We do not use letter grades because so many other factors determine a student's grade, e.g. effort, available time, study skills. For this study, we are really only interested in the student's placement in your course.)

- These ratings are for the purpose of evaluating the placement scheme and the writing assessment. They do not affect current students in any way.
- **STUDENT EFFORT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED.** You should only consider the student's **level of preparedness**. Remember: these "ratings" have no effect on the student.

If a student is no longer attending your class either:

1. Leave it blank, or
2. If you have a good idea of the student's level of preparedness, fill it in.

1	This is the rating for the student who is definitely too advanced for this class and should not be there. It is too easy for him or her. This student would be successful in the class above this level (or even higher).
2	This is the rating for the student who is at the high end of your class. He or she belongs in the class but is one of the better students.
3	This is the rating for the average student in this class. He or she will probably pass. This is the level you want your students to be at in this class.
4	This is the rating for the student whose skill level is slightly lower than ideal for this level. He or she belongs in this class. The student may be struggling but will be able to succeed with some extra work.
5	This is the rating for a student who definitely should have been placed in a lower level class . He or she will probably not succeed in this class but may pass with extraordinary effort on both your and his or her part.

Place the roster with your ratings in the manila envelope provided along with the student ratings. **Please return to Linda Ransom in the Assessment Center by Wednesday, March 15.**

Thank you for your help!

APPENDIX E: CONSEQUENTIAL VALIDITY – STUDENT FORM

Placement Survey Form

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

_____ -- _____ -- _____

First and Last Name: _____

Course Name and Number: _____

Instructor Name: _____

This survey is being used to study the assessment and placement procedures used at MPC. Your name and SSN will be kept confidential, and your answers will not affect your grade in the course. Your honest answers will help us improve our assessment and placement procedures.

1. Which statement is most true for your placement in this course?

- I should be in a lower level course – this course is too difficult for me.
- I belong in this course – this course is the correct level for me.
- I should be in a higher level course – this course is too easy for me.

2. I was placed in this course:

- by the results from the writing assessment
- because I took the prerequisite course at this college
- other reason: _____