

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

Background

The English faculty at Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) has chosen to use a locally-developed performance assessment for placement into English writing courses. The English Writing Sample was locally developed in 1994. MPC was first granted approval to use this performance assessment in 1995. More recently, MPC was granted provisional approval to use the English writing sample in spring 2000 and received full approval in later that year. 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 English 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, ethnicity, and disability status; and a description of the accommodations available for students with disabilities.

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

The process of holistic reading of essays at MPC follows the model used at the California State University system:

1. Development of Prompts

MPC has used the same prompts as the CSU, and these are the ones that have been evaluated in this validation study.

2. Rubrics

MPC English instructors read the essays and score them on a 6-point scale. MPC's Scoring Guide (see Appendix A) for holistic reading of English placement essays uses the Standard-Statements at CSU as the starting points for identifying the criteria for scoring essays and the criteria in the guide largely reflected the exit and entrance skills within our writing curriculum. A committee of English instructors elaborated each CSU Standard-Statement into specific scoring criteria grouped into three categories—writing quality, organization, and content/development.

3. Training of Readers

For each of the prompts, which we use on a rotational basis, we have selected several essay samples which represent an achievement range from the highest level to the lowest level across the full spectrum of writing performance determinable from testing sessions at MPC. These samples have been arranged in batches, duplicated, and prepared for the consensus practice on the day of the holistic reading session.

The technique used at the holistic reading session involves several steps:

- A consensus practice session is conducted at the outset of each session. The coordinator distributes batches of unscored samples to the readers, and a reading/scoring period ensues.
- At the finish, the coordinator calls for a show of hands to indicate the scores for a given essay. These are tallied and discussed in terms of the Scoring Guide. Those who find their own scoring at variance with the majority learn to adjust their standards accordingly.

4. Scoring

After sufficient consensus practice, the readers read actual essays from the test administration, then record their scores and initials in the appropriate place on the essay exam. Because of the intense concentration required for each essay, talking and moving about is kept at a minimum. A table leader is available to answer questions and give advice and guidance.

When all the essays have been read once and their scores covered, the essays are given a second reading by different readers. After the second reading, the scores are uncovered and compared by the table leader who gives a third reconciliation reading to essays which show variations of more than one point.

The final step is to arrange the essays and take a frequency count for each score. The essays are then returned to the Assessment Technician who enters the students' essay scores into their English Placement files. 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 English writing sample. Four faculty members of the English department were asked to review the course prerequisite skills and the content of the writing prompts to ensure a match. The selected faculty were chosen due to their involvement in teaching a wide range of English writing courses, from remedial through college levels.

The English writing courses in which students at MPC may be placed are: English 321 (Effective Writing Skills), English 301 (Academic Writing), English 111 (Introduction to College Writing), and English 1A (Composition).

English 321 is an open-enrollment course with no prerequisite courses nor assessment for placement requirements. English 301 carries a prerequisite of “Qualifying writing assessment results or satisfactory completion of ENGL 321.” English 111’s prerequisite is “Qualifying reading and writing assessment results or satisfactory completion of ENGL 301 and 302.” English 111 or qualifying reading and writing assessment results are the prerequisites to English 1A (the college-level English writing course).

Faculty first defined the skills taught in each of the English writing courses. As an example, the skills taught in English 301 are listed below:

1. *Understanding sentence structure, coordination, and subordination.*
2. *Using punctuation and other conventions of writing.*
3. *Developing paragraphs with relevant details and different patterns of organization.*
4. *Writing effective narration and description.*
5. *Developing ability to write analytically.*
6. *Understanding and using of essay form.*

The skills taught in higher level courses build on skills taught in the lower level courses. Specifically, the skills taught in English 321 serve as the pre-skills for the next level course, English 301. Similarly, the skills taught in English 301 are the pre-skills for English 111, and skills taught in English 111 serve as the pre-skills for English 1A. The complete set of skills taught in each of the four courses is listed in Appendix B.

The next step was for faculty to determine whether the writing solicited by the essay prompts (see Appendix C) was related to skills taught in each of the three pre-college writing courses. The four faculty employed a consensus-based approach to rating 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.

There was an excellent match between the prerequisite skills for English 111 and all three writing prompts. The raters felt that each English 111 prerequisite skill could be assessed through any of the three writing samples. In contrast, there was less of a match for English 1A and English 301 prerequisite skills. For example, the raters felt that the skills of writing accurate description based on observation and writing summaries of brief articles and chapters, both prerequisite skills for English 301, are not tested by the prompts. Similarly, the raters felt that some skills required for English 1A, such as writing accurate summaries of sophisticated material and writing an analytical essay based upon readings on a topic, are not tested by the prompts. The complete set of faculty ratings is shown in Appendix D. Despite these deficiencies, the raters felt that, overall, the writing prompts adequately assess the skills required for the English writing courses. Based on this report, the English department plans to investigate new writing prompts in the near future.

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 prerequisites.

English 321, the lowest basic-skills writing level at MPC, does not have any prerequisite. Students who receive a score of “1” on the English writing assessment place into this course. These students usually demonstrate very little writing experience and/or confidence. Responses are short, vocabulary may be poor, a lack of understanding of grammar and sentence structure is evident, and the students are clearly unable to even begin to respond to a college-level writing prompt. These skills are all clearly addressed in the four points of the Scoring Guide for placement in English 321. The prompts require some knowledge of essay format and of standard college writing modes and conventions, by asking for definition, description, example, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and argument. Students placing in English 321 will not recognize these as rhetorical writing modes and will usually respond briefly and incompletely to the prompts. Students placing in English 321 demonstrate that they are ignorant of the need to edit, proofread, or even read over what they have written.

Students receive a score of “2” or “3” are placed into English 301. They often do not understand that specific rhetorical modes are called for or that it is necessary to formulate a thesis statement with what one of our 301 texts calls an “essay map” before they start to write. As a result, these students’ responses to the prompt often turn into long personal narratives or journal-entry-type pieces, which in turn are full of informal, inappropriate English usage and many grammar errors. The combination of a lack of familiarity with college-level essay requirements and the lack of grammar and usage skills are specifically addressed in the scoring guide, where substandard diction, clichés, and the vernacular are listed in addition to grammar problems themselves. The scoring rubric also calls attention to the lack of analysis and missing or inappropriate theses, as well as an evident ignorance of how to develop an essay properly. The list of skills taught in English 301 address all of these weaknesses, concentrating on the understanding and use of the essay form based on a thesis statement and including rigorous grammar labs in our English and Study Skills Center, in addition to in-class work.

Students who place in English 111 receive a “4” from each reader. These students have had training in formal essay writing and can develop a thesis statement, but they often do not develop their support of the thesis fully, or they repeat or digress. They do not exhibit as many grammatical errors as students who place in English 321 or English 301, but they may still need help with vocabulary, concise writing, and more sophisticated syntax errors. There may be some analysis in responses to the prompts, but these students often omit parts of the prompt or take a direction in their discussion that becomes too general. The scoring guide clearly establishes the level of content, development, and organization that are required for a student to place in English 111; the prompts, in turn, give students a great deal of opportunity to demonstrate their thesis-formulation and essay-organization skills in a manner that differentiates them clearly from the “journal-entry” or personal narrative responses so often found in the responses of those who place in English 301.

For examples, a student addressing Prompt #2 who will place in English 111 will recognize this prompt as a request for an essay that argues, using cause/effect and description, why a person's influence was important to the writer. At this level, the ability to read essay questions carefully and correctly is one of the skills that can mean the difference between placement in English 111 and English 1A. Skills taught in English 111 thus prepare the student for 1A, focusing on appropriate thesis statements in response to various prompts, use of basic rhetorical forms as called for by different assignments, and development of an "interesting, engaging" style of writing, relatively free from grammar and usage errors.

Placement in English 1A requires a "5" or a "6" score from each reader. Students who place in English 1A are ready to take on college-level reading and writing assignments with no further instruction in thesis-statement formulation, use of rhetorical modes, organization, or grammar. Thus, a 1A-level essay in response to our prompts is easy to recognize and easy to score. The student's writing style is engaging, the thesis is clear, the essay is focused and well-developed using appropriate rhetorical modes, the vocabulary is good, there are few grammar errors, and the essay responds to all parts of the prompt. The scoring guide indicates all of these aspects of writing. Our prompts elicit a wide range of possible responses from students, and those students who belong in English 1A will recognize the need for a thesis statement, the request for appropriate mode(s), and the inherent need for adherence to formal academic essay format, style, and conventions. The English 1A response to MPC's prompts can also be recognized by its increased length and by the "polish" its writer has given it, proof of the student's understanding of the importance of planning, proofreading, and editing, even in a short time span.

Evidence Addressing Consequential Validity

MPC conducted a consequential validity study during spring 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 English 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 100% of the students placed into English 1A (as a result of the placement test) were appropriately placed. Similarly, 97.4% of the students placed into English 1A felt they were in the right level course. Only one student (2.6%) 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) | | 38 | | 97.4% |
| | Response 3 (too easy) | | 1 | | 2.6% |
| | | 100% | | | |

The results for placement into English 111 and English 301 (shown on the next page) were very similar. For both courses, instructors felt that 95% or more of the students were placed appropriately. Over 80% of students placed in both courses felt they were placed at the right level. However, 17.8% of students placed into English 111 and 14.3% of students placed into English 301 felt that the course was too easy. There were only five students who were placed into the lowest level course, English 321, as a result of the writing assessment. Thus, consequential validity could not be established for this course. To summarize, students and instructors, especially instructors, perceived that placement into English writing courses was appropriate.

| ENGL 111 | | Instructor Rating | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| | | Response 1 (placed too low) | Response 2, 3, 4 (correct placement) | Response 5 (placed too high) | |
| Student Rating | Response 1 (too difficult) | | | 1 | 0.9% |
| | Response 2 (right level) | 2 | 79 | 1 | 81.2% |
| | Response 3 (too easy) | 1 | 17 | | 17.8% |
| | | 3% | 95% | 2% | |

| ENGL 301 | | Instructor Rating | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| | | Response 1 (placed too low) | Response 2, 3, 4 (correct placement) | Response 5 (placed too high) | |
| Student Rating | Response 1 (too difficult) | | | 1 | 1.8% |
| | Response 2 (right level) | | 94 | 1 | 84.8% |
| | Response 3 (too easy) | | 16 | | 14.3% |
| | | 98.2% | | 1.8% | |

Evidence Supporting Cut Scores

The cut scores were established, as part of an earlier study on the validity of the English writing sample as a placement tool into English writing courses. A scoring rubric was created by MPC’s English faculty to represent each of the four levels in English writing courses. Two scores were created for each level to represent two different degrees of mastery of the prerequisite skills needed to enter the particular course. One score indicates adequate preparation; the other represents strong preparation. A score of “4”, for example, indicates adequate mastery of the prerequisite skills needed to enter English 111, and a “5” indicates strong mastery of prerequisite skills needed to enter English 111. The two raters’ scores are combined to yield a total score. An allowance is made for a one-point difference in the scores of the two raters. This was a practical matter in that a 1-point discrepancy would not require the time and expense of a third reader to resolve the difference between the two raters. (The analysis of interrater reliability is discussed in the next section of this report). Thus, the following ratings are used for placement:

| Score | Placement |
|-------|-------------|
| 10-12 | English 1A |
| 7-9 | English 111 |
| 4-6 | English 301 |
| 0-3 | English 321 |

As discussed in the previous section, in spring 2006 the English faculty conducted a consequential validity study. Depending on the course, 81.2% to 97.4% of students felt that they were placed into the right level course. Similarly, instructors felt that 95% to 100% of students in their courses were placed at the correct level. These results suggest that the current cut scores 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 English faculty and have been trained on the scoring rubric described earlier. We examined the readers’ ratings for the past year to determine interrater reliability. The table below shows the agreement among the four faculty readers (six reader pairs). Overall, there was very high reliability among the readers. The reader pairs gave the same score on 83.4% of the essays and differed by only one point on the remaining 16.6% of the essays. One reader pair in particular (Readers 3 and 4) were extremely consistent in their scoring and agreed on 100% of the essays they scored.

| Readers | Essays – same score | Essays – one-point difference | % agreement same score | % agreement one-point difference |
|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 & 2 | 19 | 7 | 73.1% | 26.9% |
| 1 & 3 | 40 | 10 | 80.0% | 20.0% |
| 1 & 4 | 23 | 7 | 76.6% | 23.3% |
| 2 & 3 | 34 | 9 | 79.1% | 20.9% |
| 2 & 4 | 49 | 8 | 86.0% | 14.0% |
| 3 & 4 | 41 | 0 | 100.0% | 0.0% |
| Overall | 206 | 41 | 83.4% | 16.6% |

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 English writing sample have not changed. In addition, the English 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 English 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 each of the reading courses was calculated for ethnicity, gender, age, and disability status. 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

| Gender | N | N placed in ENGL 1A | % placed in ENGL 1A | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------|-----|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Male | 887 | 36 | 4.0% | | The female group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 4.9% (placement rate for dominant group), or 3.97%. More than 3.9% of males placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, there is no disproportionate impact for gender for this course. |
| Female | 940 | 46 | 4.9% | 3.9% | |

ENGL 111 – Introduction to College Writing

| Gender | N | N placed in ENGL 111 | % placed in ENGL 111 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Male | 887 | 292 | 32.9% | | Again, the female group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group. Again, there is no disproportionate impact for gender. |
| Female | 940 | 329 | 35.0% | 28.0% | |

ENGL 301 – Academic Writing

| Gender | N | N placed in ENGL 301 | % placed in ENGL 301 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Male | 887 | 492 | 55.5% | 44.4% | The male group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 301. The cutoff standard is 80% * 55.5%, or 44.4%. More than 44.4% of females placed into ENGL 301; therefore, there is not disproportionate impact for gender for this course. |
| Female | 940 | 507 | 53.9% | | |

ENGL 321 – Effective Writing Skills

| Gender | N | N placed in ENGL 321 | % placed in ENGL 321 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Male | 887 | 67 | 7.6% | 6.1% | Again, the male group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 321. The cutoff standard is 80% * 7.6%, or 6.1%. Again, there is no disproportionate impact for gender for this course. |
| Female | 940 | 58 | 6.2% | | |

Summary: The results indicate that there was no disproportionate impact for gender in any of the English reading classes.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR AGE

ENGL 1A – Composition

| Age | N | N placed in ENGL 1A | % placed in ENGL 1A | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|---------------|-----|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| < 19 years | 584 | 22 | 3.8% | | The group age 25 and older was used as the reference group because it had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 1A. Less than 6.2% of students in the other age groups placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, there is disproportionate impact for age for this course. |
| 19 – 24 years | 185 | 6 | 3.2% | | |
| 25+ years | 115 | 9 | 7.8% | 6.2% | |

ENGL 111 – Introduction to College Writing

| Age | N | N placed in ENGL 111 | % placed in ENGL 111 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|---------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| < 19 years | 584 | 200 | 34.2% | 27.4% | The group under age 19 was used as the reference group because it was the largest group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 34.2% (placement rate for dominant group), or 27.4%. More than 27.4% of 19-24 year olds and students age 25 and older placed into ENGL 111; therefore, there is no disproportionate impact for age for this course. |
| 19 – 24 years | 185 | 61 | 33.0% | | |
| 25+ years | 115 | 39 | 33.9% | | |

ENGL 301 – Academic Writing

| Age | N | N placed in ENGL 301 | % placed in ENGL 301 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|---------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| < 19 years | 584 | 348 | 59.5% | 47.6% | Again, the group under age 19 was used as the reference group because it was the largest group. Again, there was no disproportionate impact for age for this course. |
| 19 – 24 years | 185 | 102 | 55.1% | | |
| 25+ years | 115 | 55 | 47.8% | | |

ENGL 321 – Effective Writing Skills

| Age | N | N placed in ENGL 321 | % placed in ENGL 321 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|---------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| < 19 years | 584 | 14 | 2.4% | | The group age 25 and older was used as the reference group because it had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 321. Older students placed into ENGL 321 at a higher rate than students in the group under age 19. |
| 19 – 24 years | 185 | 16 | 8.6% | | |
| 25+ years | 115 | 12 | 10.4% | 8.3% | |

Summary: “Older” students appear to place at higher rates into both the highest level writing course and the lowest level writing course. There are two factors that might account for this finding. First, “older” students might fall into two (or more) very different student populations. One population might be academically prepared and oriented due to participation in the workforce or other academic endeavors. In contrast, the second population of “older” students might require remedial coursework due to a prolonged absence from school. This would explain the higher placement rates into both the highest level and lowest level writing courses.

A second factor that might account for the disproportionate impact for age is the low “N” for both courses. Compared to English 111 and English 301, relatively few students place into English 1A and English 321. Due to the low Ns, it might not be appropriate to draw conclusions from the placement rates in English 1A and 321.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR ETHNICITY

ENGL 1A – Composition

| Ethnicity | N | N placed in ENGL 1A | % placed in ENGL 1A | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| White | 866 | 52 | 6.0% | 4.8% | The White ethnicity group was used as the reference group because it was the largest group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 6.0% (placement rate for dominant group), or 4.8%. Less than 4.8% of Latino, Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander, and African-American students placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, these groups were placed into ENGL 1A at a lower rate than White students. |
| Latino | 356 | 7 | 2.0% | | |
| Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander | 256 | 8 | 3.1% | | |
| African-American | 156 | 3 | 1.9% | | |
| Other non-white | 161 | 11 | 6.8% | | |

ENGL 111 – Introduction to College Writing

| Ethnicity | N | N placed in ENGL 111 | % placed in ENGL 111 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|------------------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| White | 866 | 381 | 44.0% | 35.2% | The White ethnicity group was used as the reference group because it was the largest group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 44.0% (placement rate for dominant group), or |
| Latino | 356 | 77 | 21.6% | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----|-------|--|--|
| Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander | 256 | 65 | 25.4% | | 35.2%. Less than 35.2% of Latino, Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander, and African- American students placed into ENGL 111; therefore, these groups were placed into ENGL 111 at a lower rate than White students. |
| African-American | 156 | 25 | 16.0% | | |
| Other non-white | 161 | 58 | 36.0% | | |

ENGL 301 – Academic Writing

| Ethnicity | N | N placed in ENGL 301 | % placed in ENGL 301 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| White | 866 | 404 | 46.7% | | The Latino group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 301. The cutoff standard is 80% * 68.0%, or 54.4%. White and “other non-white” students placed into this course at lower rates than Latino, Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander, and African-American students. |
| Latino | 356 | 242 | 68.0% | 54.4% | |
| Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander | 256 | 153 | 59.8% | | |
| African-American | 156 | 103 | 66.0% | | |
| Other non-white | 161 | 83 | 51.6% | | |

ENGL 321 – Effective Writing Skills

| Ethnicity | N | N placed in ENGL 321 | % placed in ENGL 321 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| White | 866 | 29 | 3.3% | | The African-American group was used as the reference group because they had the highest <i>placement rate</i> into ENGL 321. The cutoff standard is 80% * 16.0%, or 12.8%. All other ethnicity groups placed into this course at lower rates than African-American. |
| Latino | 356 | 30 | 8.4% | | |
| Asian/ Filipino/ Pacific Islander | 256 | 30 | 11.7% | | |
| African-American | 156 | 25 | 16.0% | 12.8% | |
| Other non-white | 161 | 9 | 5.6% | | |

Summary: For ENGL 1A, the highest-level course in the series, the White group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group. Non-white groups (except the “other” ethnicity group) are less likely to place into ENGL 1A. The results indicate possible disproportionate impact for the non-white students. However, it should be pointed out that the “N” for ENGL 1A is relatively low; thus, the results should be interpreted with caution.

For ENGL111, the White group was again used as the reference group. Non-white groups (except the “other” ethnicity group) are less likely to place into ENGL 111. In contrast, the Latino group was used as the reference group in the analysis of ENGL 301. Students in the White and “other non-white” groups placed into this course at lower rates than the other ethnicity groups. Taken together, the results for these two courses indicate disproportionate impact for the non-white students.

Finally, the African-American group was used as the reference group in the analysis of ENGL 321, the lowest level course in the series. There appears to be disproportionate impact for African-American students into this course. Again, it should be pointed out that the “N” for ENGL 321 is relatively low; thus, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Thus, the results suggest that certain ethnic groups are less likely to place into the relatively higher level or English writing course, and more likely to place into the relatively lower level course. However, the demographics of the MPC student population indicate that the students from certain non-white groups are lower income and come from high schools with lower achievement test scores. Low income and lower achievement in high school are related to achievement in college; therefore, there is no great concern that the English writing sample, in itself, is causing differential placement rates.

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

ENGL 1A – Composition

| Disability status | N | N placed in ENGL 1A | % placed in ENGL 1A | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Learning Disability | 115 | 6 | 5.2% | 4.2% | The non learning disabled group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 5.2% (placement rate for larger group), or 4.2%. Exactly 4.2% of learning disabled students placed into ENGL 1A; therefore, there is no disproportionate impact for this course. |
| No learning disability | 1630 | 70 | 4.2% | | |

ENGL 111 – Introduction to College Writing

| Disability status | N | N placed in ENGL 111 | % placed in ENGL 111 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Learning Disability | 115 | 28 | 24.3% | | Again, the non learning disabled group was used as the reference group. The cutoff standard is 80% * 35.2%, or 28.2%. Learning disabled students placed into this course at a lower rate. |
| No learning disability | 1630 | 574 | 35.2% | 28.2% | |

ENGL 301 – Academic Writing

| Disability status | N | N placed in ENGL 301 | % placed in ENGL 301 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Learning Disability | 115 | 66 | 57.4% | 45.9% | Again, the non learning disabled group was used as the reference group because it was the larger group. Again, there was no disproportionate impact for learning disability. |
| No learning disability | 1630 | 888 | 54.5% | | |

ENGL 321 – Effective Writing Skills

| Disability status | N | N placed in ENGL 321 | % placed in ENGL 321 | 80% of dominant group | Comments |
|------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Learning Disability | 115 | 15 | 13.0% | 10.4% | The learning disabled group was used as the reference group because this group had a higher <i>placement rate</i> . The cutoff standard is 80% * 13.0%, or 10.4%. Non learning disabled students placed into this course at a lower rate. |
| No learning disability | 1630 | 98 | 6.0% | | |

Summary: Learning disabled students were more likely to place into the ENGL 321, the lowest level writing course, than non learning disabled students. In contrast, learning disabled students were less likely to place into ENGL 111, a relatively higher level writing course. A learning disability might impair students' writing skills; therefore, the differential placement rates into ENGL 111 and ENGL 321 might be a result of the learning disability and not caused by the English writing sample itself. 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 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: SCORING GUIDE

STANDARDS FOR HOLISTIC READING OF ENGLISH PLACEMENT ESSAYS

Score: 5-6 → English 1A

WRITING QUALITY

- Style is engaging: interesting to read, perhaps some use of figurative language.
- Fluency in use of language/ ease in writing.
- Sentences well-constructed/ clear syntax/ sentence variety.
- Vocabulary: precise diction, variation in vocabulary, avoidance of redundancy.
- Almost free of grammatical and mechanical errors.

CONTENT/DEVELOPMENT

- Thesis clearly stated; essay is consistently focused.
- Content is a thoughtful, reflective response to prompt; displays probing of ideas.
- Clear progression of idea units throughout essay.
- Content supports the thesis, is substantially developed with concrete detail and images to avoid vagueness.

ORGANIZATION

- Paragraphs developed in a logical sequence from thesis.
- Clear/relevant beginning and ending.
- Responds to all parts of the prompt.

Standard-Statement at CSU:

A superior response will address itself to all three aspects of the question. Though it may have occasional faults, it will be well organized, well detailed, and generally well written.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 4 → English 111

WRITING QUALITY

- Style may be somewhat interesting; demonstrates some fluency in the use of language.
- Or style may be dull, formal, boring to read.
- Or may be inflated use of language, which D.G. has dubbed “Baroque blather,” i.e, high articulation with little clarity.
- Syntax lacks variety.
- Vocabulary: inexact diction; needs variation in vocabulary.
- Contains some grammatical and mechanical errors/ some errors in sentence structure.

CONTENT/DEVELOPMENT

- Thesis over-generalized or simply rephrased from the prompt.
- Content may be substantive, does some probing but remains vague, not much analysis.
- Makes some progress from A to Z but insufficient details.
- Content needs more development with detail, is repetitious, may contain digressions irrelevant to thesis.

ORGANIZATION

- Organization is evident but not full.
- One or more parts of the prompt may not be developed enough.

Standard-Statement at CSU:

These scores will be appropriate for generally competent papers which may slight one of the three parts of the question; may not be as clearly organized or as fully developed as the superior paper; may have some minor mechanical problems.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 2-3 → English 301

WRITING QUALITY

- Syntax lacks variety.
- Sentences contain awkward structures or faulty logic.
- Vocabulary: diction is substandard for college work; too many vague words (“nice” or “thing”), overuse of clichés/ the vernacular (“blew my mind”).
- Contains frequent grammatical and mechanical errors.
- Or, on the other hand, sentences give the appearance of correct/ even sophisticated structures but content is circular and diction is pompous. Style may be chatty (overuse of the vernacular) or may be rhetorical (large assertions without development).

CONTENT/DEVELOPMENT

- Thesis unstated or may be inappropriate to prompt.
- Content is a trite, shallow response to prompt; little or no probing or analysis.
- Little or no progression of idea units is evident—perhaps due to repetition of general statements that are not developed or probed.
- Content needs detail to develop general/vague sentences; development is repetitious, may contain awkward interjections.

ORGANIZATION

- Organization is not sustained or unclear/incoherent.
- Introduction takes too long to get to the point.
- One or more parts of the prompt may not be developed enough or omitted.

Standard-Statement at CSU:

These scores will be appropriate for the following kinds of papers:

- Those in which the student provides narration/description of the situation with little explanation or analysis.
- Those in which the student over generalizes about the viewpoint.
- Those in which the writing exhibits serious weaknesses in structure, syntax, and diction.

STANDARDS FOR SCORING ESSAYS

Score: 1 → English 321

OVERALL IMPRESSION

- Content is not focused, wanders, may not respond to prompt directly or clearly; grossly incoherent; skeletal.
- Sentences may be incomprehensible.
- Vocabulary: imprecise, vague/general, or slang.
- Frequent grammatical and mechanical errors.

Standard-Statement at CSU:

Non-response papers or those which argue with or avoid the questions or those which seem to indicate second-language difficulties should be given to the table leader.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF SKILLS TAUGHT IN COURSES

CLASS: ENGLISH 321 – EFFECTIVE WRITING SKILLS

1. Understanding basic sentence structure and basic rules for mechanics.
2. Using free writing to generate ideas/overcome writer's block.
3. Writing accurate description based on observation.
4. Writing summaries of brief articles and chapters.

CLASS: ENGLISH 301 – ACADEMIC WRITING

1. Understanding sentence structure, coordination, and subordination.
2. Using punctuation and other conventions of writing.
3. Developing paragraphs with relevant details and different patterns of organization.
4. Writing effective narration and description.
5. Developing ability to write analytically.
6. Understanding and using of essay form based on thesis statement.

CLASS: ENGLISH 111 – INTRODUCTION TO COLLEGE WRITING

1. Understanding of the writing process: prewriting, writing drafts, revising, proofreading, and editing.
2. Structuring sentences for clarity and variety.
3. Employing punctuation and usage according to the conventions of standard written English.
4. Writing coherent and well-developed paragraphs employing basic rhetorical forms such as narration, description, comparison-contrast, and analysis.
5. Writing accurate summaries of sophisticated material.
6. Writing coherent narrative (500-1000 words).
7. Writing a 500-word expository essay relatively free of grammatical error and interesting to read.
8. Writing an analytical essay based upon readings on a topic (500-1000 words).
9. Developing imagination, insight, and original thought.
10. Developing an interesting, engaging style of writing.
11. Formulating and supporting an appropriate thesis.

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.

APPENDIX C: WRITING PROMPTS

Prompt #1

In defining success, many people tend to concentrate on the amount of money a person earns, but there are many other criteria for measuring success. Write an essay in which you state your belief about what makes a person successful, then choose a person whom you consider to be successful and describe how this person illustrates your definition of success.

Prompt #2

Write about a person (other than a parent) who has had a major influence on you. Be sure to describe the person, explain how that person influenced you, and why the influence was important.

Prompt #3

In what one-year period do you feel you experienced the most personal growth and change? How would you describe yourself before and after this period? Why do you think this change was significant?

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: _____