

**SCHEV Report on Written Communication Competency  
Assessment**

**Submitted Fall 2022**

**Southwest Virginia Community College**

**General Education  
Written Communication Assessment Committee**

## I. Goals and Outcomes: Written Communication

Definition: ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Degree graduates will be able to express themselves effectively in a variety of written forms.

Outcomes:

- Purpose and Focus: Clearly-stated purpose that addresses the writing task and/or audience in a thoughtful way.
- Content and Development: Substantial, logical and concrete development of ideas; effective use of paragraph structure.
- Organization: Well-organized content, with effective transitions; effective beginning and ending paragraphs.
- Language and Style: Appropriate and precise word choice; language and sentence structure are alive, mature, and varied.
- Mechanics and Conventions: Few mechanical and usage errors; evidence of superior control of diction.

Original Goals (pre-COVID-19 campus response):

- To test 80-100 prospective degree graduates.
- At least 80% will score at the adequate competence level 4 in each outcome. Levels 4-6 are considered competent. See attached rubric.

Modified Goals (aligned with COVID-19 campus response and virtual learning):

- To test 50-75 freshmen and sophomore students in ENG 112: College Composition II and HIS 121: Survey of American History I courses for comparative levels of writing competence.
- At least 80% will score as “competent college writing.”

## II. SWCC Written Communication Assessment Results—Spring 2021 and 2022

### Overview:

During the spring semester 2022, fifty-six first year and second year students in two sections of ENG 112: College Composition II ( $n = 35$ ) and two sections of HIS 121: Survey of American History I ( $n = 21$ ) submitted course assignments to their instructors for grading (see Table 1).

The sample size of fifty student writings met the lower range of 50-75 writing samples to be scored according to the modified goals for the Spring 2022 assessment plan. The table below also contains data from the Spring 21 data collection period

Table 1. Count by Contributing Courses Over Time

<b>Contributing Courses</b>	<b>Participating Students (Spring 2021)</b>	<b>Participating Students (Spring 2022)</b>
ENG 112	N= 30	N= 35
Course Outside of Composition Sequence	N=20	N=21
Total essays scored	<i>n</i> = 50	<i>n</i> = 56

One added benefit of the modified assessment plan is the comparative results of students within English classes and students who are writing in other contexts. The value of comparing students inside and outside of English courses speaks to the transferability of composition skills by our students. The comparative results may also inform suggestions for future assessments, changes in writing instruction and preparation, and universal application of the writing sample rubric for general outcomes and goals (see sections “Conclusions” and “Proposed Action Plan—Suggested Curriculum Changes” below).

### Summary and Analysis of Results

This year’s sample was scored holistically in order to ascertain competency in overall college writing. As evidence by Table 2, we continue to see that students writing within the Composition sequence do better inside composition courses than they do outside of it:

Table 2: Holistic assessment results over time.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Percentage Competent 2021</b>	<b>Percentage Competent 2022</b>
English 112	90%	91%
Course Outside the Composition Sequence	85%	66%

### III. Conclusions

The following conclusions are submitted for consideration:

1. The original assessment plan indicated a larger sample size with an exit writing assessment to 80-100 second year, second semester prospective degree graduates identified in end-of-program courses. While the modified assessment plan indicated a smaller sample size of 50-75 scored student writing samples, the plan also provided an

unexpected opportunity to compare students within English classes and in other disciplines

2. ENG 112 students' writing samples were judged to be competent at much higher rates than those in the History course. This suggests that students are not transferring skills to their other courses. It is worth noting, however, that the English 111 and 112 sequence is the most common sequence to be taken as dual enrollment. With this in mind, it could be that many of the students in the History course are taking composition courses at the high school. Based on these two observations, strategies to increase the quality of writing across the curriculum and to increase the quality of writing produced in dual enrollment classes is suggested.

#### **IV. Proposed Action Plan—Suggested Curriculum and Assessment Plan Changes**

The following suggestions for an action plan to address the findings and conclusions are submitted for consideration:

1. Sharing of results with stakeholders: Share the final report including results, conclusions, and proposed action plan with stakeholders in this modified first Written Communication assessment, including faculty; the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences; the Institutional Research & Assessment Officer/SACSCOC Liaison; and the Vice President, Academic and Student Services.
2. Curriculum: Add professional development in Writing across the Curriculum to assist faculty in identifying strategies that lead to greater transference of skills across disciplines.
3. Assessment: Ensure that a larger sample size is used next year and include the rubric that was derived from the *Report of the VCCS Task Force on Assessing Core Competencies, 2002* and *VCCS Core Competence Assessment: Written Communication 2002-03 and 2009-10*, mapped to the learning outcomes, and modified as needed to reflect assessment expectations.
4. Curriculum: Add assessments of dual enrollment writing samples to provide the comparative data to support or refute the theory that dual enrollment students may be performing at a lower rate.