To: Ielleen Miller, GECC Chair
From: Justin Young, Director of English Composition; Tim Roe, Lecturer, Department of English
Date: October 31, 2011
Re: General Education Assessment Assessment for English 201

Executive Summary

In the spring quarter of 2011, the English Composition program completed an evaluation of how well one of the major course assignments was meeting one of the General Education objectives and goals. The Annotated Bibliography's from 10 different sections were evaluated. The results demonstrated that English 201 is meeting the research goals. Students demonstrated an ability to develop effective research questions, find scholarly sources, and apply them to their own writing. Improvements needed are norming between the individual sections to develop greater consistency between the assignments and their assessment.

Course Information

ENGL 201
College Composition: Analysis, Research, and Documentation

Catalog Description:

Stresses research skills, analytical writing, logic, and other skills necessary to comprehend, synthesize, and respond intelligently to academic discourse. Practices source evaluation and documentation across the disciplines. A special study unit emphasizing effective use of library resources is included.

Assessment

Instructors of English 201 in the Spring 2011 quarter assessed one of the major assignments, the annotated bibliography, to determine how well students were meeting the following goal and objective:

Goal 3. “Students will have a sound understanding of strategies for identifying, locating, and using outside sources (e.g. articles or interviews) relevant to their writing projects.”

Objective 2. “Students will be able to form lists of sources representing diverse perspectives on a given issue and will be able to
synthesize such sources objectively so that readers can understand the issue.

The rubric used (see Appendix A) to assess the annotated bibliography contained the following criteria:

- Research Question: The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.
- Sources: The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.
- Format: Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double spaced. All necessary information is included.
- Annotations: Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student's research question, and the connection to other sources.

Instructors evaluated student's effectiveness in each of these areas using the following scale:

[ ] 5  Well done
[ ] 4
[ ] 3
[ ] 2
[ ] 1 Inadequate

Instructors then summarized their findings and added their comments about the assignment by completing the Annotated Bibliography Assessment Form (see Appendix B). Instructors used their own prompt and assignment guidelines for the annotated bibliography. This was done to maintain the authenticity of assessing the effectiveness of the current course, and to not bias the results by having each instructor working with the same assignment prompts. All assignment prompts include expectations such as:

- A minimum number of sources (8-10 depending on the instructor)
- Correct MLA formatting of each citation
- Summary of each source
• Analysis and/or synthesis of each source

Summary of Results

The following is the average score for all sections completing the assessment (see Appendix C for the individual class scores).

1. Research Question: The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.

   Average score: 4.07

2. Sources: The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.

   Average score: 4.38

3. Format: Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double spaced. All necessary information is included.

   Average score: 4.19

4. Annotations: Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student's research question, and the connection to other sources.

   Average score: 3.96

Interpretation of Results

(See Appendix D for individual instructor comments)
Overall, students did well on the assignment and are learning important concepts about research. Students clearly met Goal 3 and Objective 2 of the General Education guidelines. Students are understanding principles of information literacy by becoming active participants in the research process. Further, most students are completing appropriate, college level research successfully. The following lists the overall results:

- Students understand the importance of research questions
- Students are able to develop appropriate research questions for college writing
- Many students are implementing MLA formatting correctly, but some students need to spend more time using the required handbook to incorporate MLA formatting more accurately
- Some students are not following the basic instructions
- Students understand the difference between popular and scholarly sources, and are doing a good job of finding scholarly research for their papers
- Most students can apply background and make connections to inform their reading of their source material, but some students do not understand how to contextualize their research
- Students are effectively summarizing their sources
- In classes where synthesis is a point of emphasis students are successfully synthesizing their papers; in classes that do not emphasize synthesis students are completing poorer synthesis
- Each instructor’s course has a slightly different focus which leads to small differences in how the assignments were evaluated, and in the success of each assignment

Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions represent how English 201 can be improved. The first two bullet points will be implemented by discussing how to better introduce and teach the concepts at the instructor training workshops. Norming will occur as a part of the English 101 norming session held each quarter. Specific areas for improvement are:

- Emphasize the assignment directions
- Focus more class instruction on teaching students to contextualize their research
• Complete at least 1 norming session of English 201 assignments each quarter to insure assignments and grading is consistent across all sections
Appendix A

Annotated Bibliography Assessment Instrument
English Composition Program
Spring 2011

Research Question: The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.

[ ] 5 Well done
[ ] 4
[ ] 3
[ ] 2
[ ] 1 Inadequate

Sources: The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.

[ ] 5 Well done
[ ] 4
[ ] 3
[ ] 2
[ ] 1 Inadequate

Format: Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double spaced. All necessary information is included.

[ ] 5 Well done
[ ] 4
[ ] 3
[ ] 2
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Annotations: Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student’s research question, and the connection to other sources.

[ ] 5 Well done
[ ] 4
[ ] 3
[ ] 2
[ ] 1 Inadequate
Appendix B

Annotated Bibliography Assessment
English Composition Program
Spring 2011

1) Based on the results of your assessment, how well have your students met the goal and objective below?

Goal 3. “Students will have a sound understanding of strategies for identifying, locating, and using outside sources (e.g. articles or interviews) relevant to their writing projects.”

Objective 2. “Students will be able to form lists of sources representing diverse perspectives on a given issue and will be able to synthesize such sources objectively so that readers can understand the issue.”

Comments:

2) Please note the average score for each criterion in the rubric (average the scores of your class together):

1) 
2) 
3) 
4)

3) Please include any general comments about the assessment here:
Research Question: The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.

OVERALL COMMENTS:

Sources: The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.

OVERALL COMMENTS:

Format: Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double-spaced. All necessary information is included.

OVERALL COMMENTS:

Annotations: Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student’s research question, and the connection to other sources.

OVERALL COMMENTS:
Appendix C

Assessment Criteria

1. **Research Question:** The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.

2. **Sources:** The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.

3. **Format:** Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double spaced. All necessary information is included.

4. **Annotations:** Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student’s research question, and the connection to other sources.

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Appendix D

1) Based on the results of your assessment, how well have your students met the goal and objective below?

**Goal 3.** “Students will have a sound understanding of strategies for identifying, locating, and using outside sources (e.g. articles or interviews) relevant to their writing projects.”

**Objective 2.** “Students will be able to form lists of sources representing diverse perspectives on a given issue and will be able to synthesize such sources objectively so that readers can understand the issue.”

- Since my students averaged about 4 out of 5 in all categories, I believe they met the goal and exceeded expectations. I know my students have a sound grasp on evaluating and using outside sources now.
- The majority of my class passed this assignment. We had done many in-class assignments that had introduced them to and prepared them for the Annotated Bibliography. I also allowed my students to do revisions which I provided clear instructions on what they needed to fix.
- My students have met goal 3 well. They learned a variety of different research methods. They have met objective 2 well, although some students merely summarized instead of synthesized. They listened to my feedback and will revise.
- Overall, I think the class did well finding reliable sources and trying the information they gained into a solid, easily understood synthesis. They did a good job remaining objective in their research as well.

2) Please note the average score for each criterion in the rubric (average the scores of your class together):

See Appendix C

3) Please include any general comments about the assessment here:

- Most of the Annotated Bibliographies I received showed a thorough evaluation of sources and a wonderful depth of thought. They had clearly read their sources with a critical eye and paid careful attention to the guidelines of the assignment.
- This assessment was a bit generalized for the individual categories with the 1-5 scoring range. For example, I didn’t think it was appropriate to award a student a 5 in the citation portion if they had only a few minor errors because it would be indistinguishable from a student that scored a 5 with no errors. However, at the same time, I didn’t think a 4 would be an accurate reflection for citations with minor and minimal errors because scoring 4 out of 5 implies that the student did B-quality work. The scoring for the assessment could have had a wider range (1-10) to allow room for the granular details. I noticed the scoring from this rubric did not match the actual percentage I gave the individual assignments.
• The students did well with choosing their topics and their synthesis. Some, however, struggled with documenting/citing correctly, but they took my feedback for their revision. Overall, the students did well.
• Overall I was pleased with the students’ understanding of the assignment and their efforts in research. We could have spent some more time on MLA. I think that would have been helpful.

**Research Question:** The Research Question is academic in nature, appropriately focused for the stage in the research process, and reflects the complexity of ongoing discussion on the issue.

• 11 students forgot to put their research question on their A.B. and therefore received a “1” score. This brought down the average a lot since most students (26 of 47) got a 5.
• My students all scored a 5 on this portion of the assessment. I had proposed five narrowed topics for my students to research. There were many scholarly writings covering all aspects surrounding each of these five topics. My students then extracted an inquiry from their selected topic and I ensured the quality of their research inquiries by having them submit a topic proposal that listed at least six distinct researchable and supporting points related to their inquiries.
• I was surprised to see 5 missing research questions here since I know that 4 of the 5 students had very good questions. This was also clear from their sources. The other problems were either a binary approach (yes/no; good/bad) or too broad a focus.
• The students chose appropriate topics to continue the academic discussion.
• Most students really understood the importance of a research question and invested in crafting a good one.

**Sources:** The sources listed include necessary background information and reflect a range of scholarly/professional perspectives on the issue.

• Most students understood the need to have scholarly, credible sources with good variety. They lost points when they didn’t have enough scholarly sources or they failed to give context for their obscure sources.
• In my prompt, I required my students to include a minimum of six academic sources and for the most part, they followed my instructions. The most common issue that caused my students to lose points was that a few of their sources in their annotated bibliography had too similar of content (so they weren’t investigating and developing six distinct points).
• We had an excellent library presentation this time, and students seemed comfortable with the databases though some had problems with search terms. Problems were a too-heavy reliance on newspapers and blogs – especially since no comments were made in those cases about the credibility of the author.
• Overall, they included a variety of perspectives.
• I might have spent more class time on giving context in a summary in the future.
Format: Citations are properly formatted. They are arranged in alphabetical order using hanging indent and double-spaced. All necessary information is included.

- Most students did very well in this category because I provided them with a few models. Students who didn’t do well obviously paid little attention to the assignment guidelines or classroom instruction.
- A lot of students omitted the volume and issue numbers in their citations of scholarly journals and/or the section number of periodicals. Errors were minor, but repetitive.
- It looks like students relied heavily on the database citations since the problems were not the citation itself but failing to alphabetize, double space or use hanging indent.
- They properly cited and for most students, the format was correct.
- MLA is always tricky, but I think the students did well overall.

Annotations: Annotations reflect opportunities for co-inquiry and knowledge building by demonstrating the ability to synthesize. Thus, the annotations include the authority of the source, the relevant content of the source, the relevance to the student’s research question, and the connection to other sources.

- I graded this category the hardest because I feel the annotations and evaluations of sources are important skills to apply. I had fewer 5s in this category mainly because it wasn’t enough to simply state that a source was scholarly. I wanted students to note the authors and provide more context.
- Common problems with the annotations were: students would lose focus and not directly link the content of their sources to their research inquiries, summaries of the six sources became repetitive of each other and/or it was difficult to extract a clear and distinct point from each annotation.
- The most marked problem was a tendency to summarize rather than synthesize or offer comments about how the source would contribute. I was interested to note that the students who took care to comment on the credibility of their sources were the very ones with the most clearly scholarly sources based on journal titles!
- They struggled with this a little (some of them). However, after I gave individual feedback, they improved their annotations to synthesize the sources more.
- We practiced synthesizing information quite a bit in class and I was pleased with how the students transferred those skills to their annotated bibliographies.