

Student Readiness for English 101

A Report prepared for the Committee on Writing Standards, Humanities Department, Capital Community College, February 2002

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Background

Following up on an earlier assessment of student readiness for English 101, the Humanities Department's Committee on Writing Standards decided to repeat the early-semester writing sample assessment that had been previously conducted in the spring and fall semesters of 1999. The committee decided to use the same writing prompts that had been used in the fall 1999 assessment and ask faculty to rate students as A) appropriately placed/ready for 101, B) needs support/tutoring recommended, or C) not ready/transfer to a developmental course advised. Results of the spring 2002 assessment are described below.

How students enter English 101:

These tables show the ways students came into English 101 in 1999 (both semesters) and in spring 2002. In 1999, students came into English 101 through placement testing (39.9%), passing 006 (34.5%), English 001 Waiver (9.6%), ESL (2.2%) and "Other" (14.6%); in spring 2002, students entered English 101 through placement testing (40.9%), passing 006 (38.3%), English 001 Waiver (2.6%), ESL (3.2%) and "Other" (14.9%). "English 001 Waiver" means that students were given permission to skip the higher developmental class (English 006) and go directly into English 101 after completing English 001.

"Other" includes transfer, academic advising, or unclear means.

Notably, in 2002 there was a decrease in students entering English 101 directly from English 001, perhaps as a result of the 1999 study.

Total 99

101	total	placement	Pass 006	001 Waiver	118 ESL IV	other
total	418	164 (39.3%)	144 (34.5%)	40 (9.6%)	9 (2.2%)	61 (14.6%)

Spring 02

101	total	placement	Pass 006	001 Waiver	118 ESL IV	other
total	154	63 (40.9%)	59 (38.3%)	4 (2.6%)	5 (3.2%)	23 (14.9%)

Assessment of Placement/Readiness

In comparing the 1999 assessment with the 2002, it is perhaps most appropriate to compare the 2002 results with only the fall 1999 results, since both these assessments used the same, more challenging writing prompt. Interestingly, the 2002 results show students to be judged “101 ready” at a much higher rate than in 1999.

Fall 99

The table below, for fall 1999, shows that teachers judged students to be 101 Ready/appropriately placed only 59.0% of the time, with another 34.6% in need of extra support such as office hours or tutoring. Teachers found that 6.3% of students were misplaced and recommended they transfer to a lower course.

101	total	placement	Pass 006	001 Waiver	118 ESL IV	other
101 Ready	120 (58.6%)	59 (65.5%)	33 (54.1%)	6 (35.3%)	1 (20 %)	21 (65.6%)
Marginal	72 (35.1%)	26 (28.8%)	27 (44.3%)	8 (47.0%)	2 (40 %)	9 (28.1%)
Not Ready	13 (6.3%)	5 (5.5%)	1 (1.6%)	3 (17.6%)	2 (40%)	2 (6.2%)

Spring 02

This table below, for spring 2002, shows that teachers judge students to be 101 Ready/appropriately placed 76.0% of the time, with another 22.7% in need of extra support such as office hours or tutoring. Teachers found that only 1.3% of students were misplaced in English 101 and recommended they transfer to a lower course. Again, students entering 101 through placement testing and advising were 101 ready at least as often as students coming from 006. Students coming into 101 directly from 001 or ESL are also still more likely to be seen as marginal or requiring additional support.

101	total	placement	Pass 006	001 Waiver	118 ESL IV	other
101 Ready	117 (76.0%)	61 (96.8%)	38 (64.4%)		2 (40 %)	16 (69.6%)
Marginal	35 (22.7%)	2 (3.2%)	21 (35.6%)	4 (100%)	3 (60 %)	5 (21.7%)
Not Ready	2 (1.3%)					2 (8.7%)

Variations Among Readers

The fall 1999 assessment found significant variations in scoring among readers. Then, as in 2002, there was no norming process or second reader, and therefore no process whereby differences could be negotiated. Also, the sample size was smaller (205 in fall 1999, 133 in spring 2002) and several of the faculty participants were different, thus making comparisons difficult.

Conclusions

These results suggest that students placed into English 101 through the Accuplacer test and through transfer and/or advising are appropriately placed and 101 Ready at least as often as students who come through the developmental sequence.

These results also suggest that following the 1999 assessment, fewer students make the leap directly from English 001 or ESL to English 101; this, together with an increased emphasis on writing in response to reading texts in English 006, may account for the improvement in readiness for English 101.

These results continue to suggest that we may be able to identify a significant number of students, approximately 20% to 25%, who would benefit from early intervention in the form of strong encouragement to make use of office hours, Learning Center writing tutors, and/or introduction to electronic resources such as CCC's "Guide to Grammar and Writing."

Finally, the wide variations in results among readers suggests that instituting a process of second readers or group holistic scoring would add greater validity and consistency to standards and expectations in English 101.

Appendix : Writing Prompt, Spring 2002

Student Code: _____
(Banner ID or Social Security Number)

In-Class Writing (Version #1)

Cheating is now considered to be a major problem in colleges and universities. How to cope with it has become a favorite topic of conversation at faculty meetings and conferences. Several professors say they've dropped the traditional term paper requirement. Why? Many students buy prewritten term papers. And faculty members say they can't track down all the cheaters anymore. "I may be wrong," said one professor wistfully, "but I think the situation has gotten worse in the past few years. I used to catch students making up footnotes. Today they simply buy the whole paper."

Read the above passage and compose one or more carefully written paragraphs on the issues raised. In your answer, you may want to address these questions:

- Why does this writer claim that cheating in college is a serious problem?
- Do you agree that cheating in school is a serious problem? Why or why not?

You have thirty minutes to complete this writing task. You may revise and make corrections on your paper, but please write neatly.
