

General Education Requirements

Preparatory English and the Final Writing Course

As required by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), UCR conducted an evaluation of general education during the last calendar year. Part of this evaluation focused on preparatory English and the English 1 series. We report here on the results of these studies.

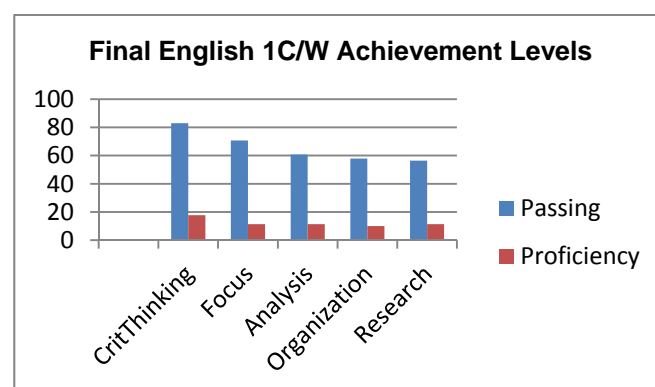
Students take an English language placement test, the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE), prior to matriculation. If they receive a failing score on the AWPE, they are placed into one of the preparatory English courses (Basic Writing 3, English 4, 5, or 1PA). About half of UCR freshmen place into preparatory English. If they receive a passing score, they are placed into the English 1 sequence (English 1A, 1B, and 1C). Three of UCR's undergraduate colleges have adopted writing-across-the-curriculum (W) courses as a substitute for English 1C.

Preparatory English Study. The preparatory English evaluation consisted of a comparison of the writing level of students prior to their enrollment in the preparatory English curriculum and at the time of their completion of their course in fall 2011. The study examined the writing of 75 randomly selected students (20 each from BSWT 3, English 4, and English 1PA, and 15 from English 5). Students scores on the placement examination were compared to their scores on final course papers using the same grading rubric developed for grading the AWPE. We trained readers on the rubric, and we found inter-rater reliability to be high. Two readers read and rated each essay, and a third rated the papers in the few cases of sizable disagreement between the first two readers.

All courses showed a significant increase in average essay scores. The average essay score in the placement exam for BSWT 3 students was 2.13 and their average score for their final exam essay was 2.81. English 4 students scored on average 3.03 on the placement test and 3.36 in their final exam essays. However, average final examination scores were still below passing (4) for all courses studies, according to the AWPE rubric. These low average scores indicate that many students

may need better preparation for passage into English 1. This evidence alone is not conclusive: it should be read together with other evidence from students' performance in preparatory English (e.g. 79.5% of students passed English 4 in fall 2012).

Final Writing Course Study. We randomly sampled 20 final papers for each English 1C and W course offered in AY 2011-12, 140 essays in all. We scored six areas: (1) critical thinking, (2) research, (3) analysis, (4) focus, (5) organization, and (6) style. Scores in each area ranged from 1 through 6. We achieved high alpha reliability scores between readers in each of the assessed areas. Again, we employed a third reader in cases of sizable disagreement between the first two readers. In the chart below, we show the percentage of students with passing levels (scores of 4 or higher) and clear proficiency levels (scores of 5 and 6) for five of the six assessed areas.



Mean scores hovered near 4 in all six measured areas. A majority of students in the study achieved satisfactory scores in critical thinking and focus. However, a majority of students did not achieve satisfactory scores in research, analysis, organization, or style. The scores of students in English 1C and W courses were not statistically distinguishable from one another. Students in some W courses performed better than English 1C students, and students in other W courses performed less well in particular scored areas. For the full report, see: http://ueeval.ucr.edu/uwp_evaluation_report_dec_12.pdf.