

ADVANCED WRITING CORE ASSESSMENT REPORT

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

FEBRUARY 10, 2022

Introduction

The Core student learning objectives identify the educational priorities for all undergraduates in Santa Clara University's undergraduate Core Curriculum. Assessment of student learning is ongoing in the Core; we seek to understand in what ways students are challenged or excel in their progress toward achieving the learning objectives, and how the Core can offer better support for faculty teaching in these areas.

This assessment report summarizes the findings from an assessment of the learning objectives for Advanced Writing (AW) undergraduate Core requirement. When the 2009 Core was approved, AW was described in the following way:

Building on the Critical Thinking & Writing sequence, students will select one course already required for their major or the Explorations section of the Core (designated with a "W" in the title) that has an Advanced Writing component. The primary purpose of this component will be to deepen familiarity with the values, genres, and conventions relevant to students' major field of study. Advanced writing, taught by English faculty and others, will also provide additional study of and practice in rhetorical theory, composing processes, critical thinking, and information literacy, within a variety of discipline-specific contexts. Like the CTW sequence, Advanced Writing also helps students gain increased sophistication in critical reading and writing with a purpose, including addressing diverse audiences through a range of styles and voices. Many majors currently offer this instruction in one or more courses. Students in majors that do not offer this coursework will be able to take Advanced Writing embedded in another Core requirement. Development of Advanced Writing courses will require investment in an expansion of the current Writing Program in the English Department to facilitate faculty development in writing across the curriculum as well as a Writing Center to support student learning directly through tutoring and other means.

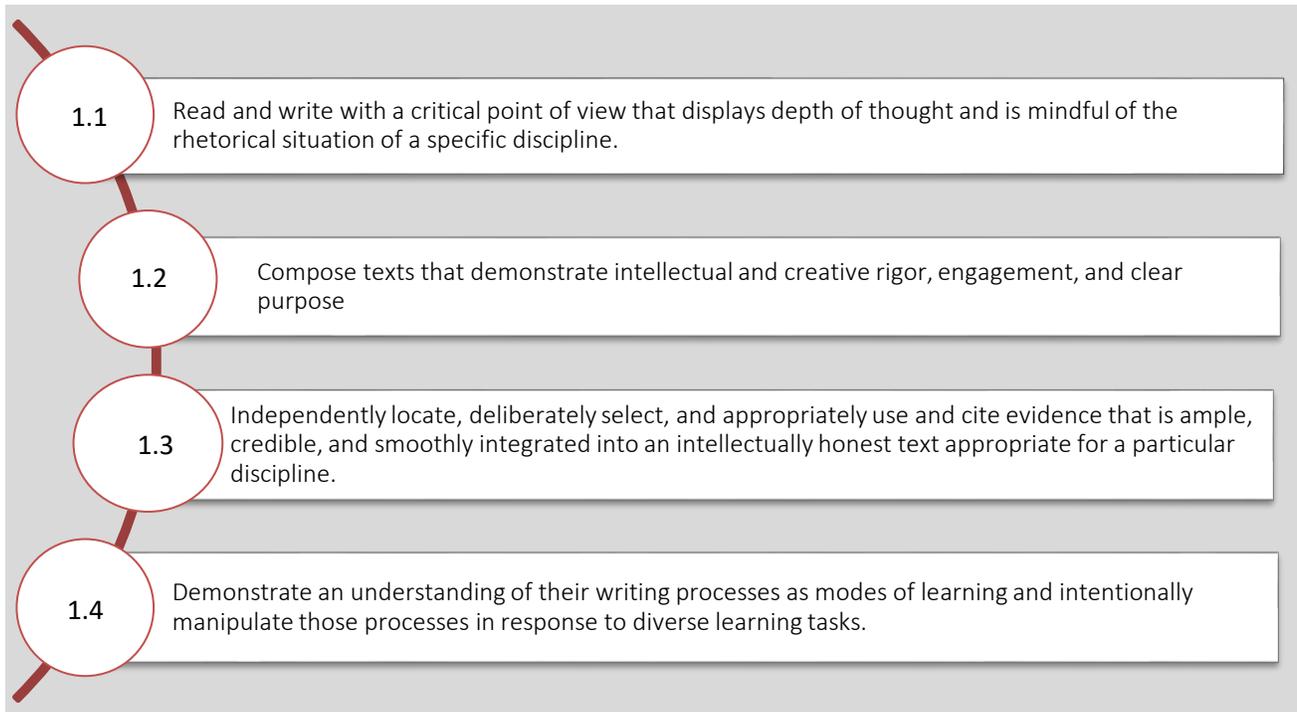
The Core Learning goals identified for AW include:

- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to identify, reflect upon, evaluate, integrate, and apply different types of information and knowledge to form independent judgments
- **Complexity:** An approach to understanding the world that appreciates ambiguity and nuance as well as clarity and precision
- **Communication:** Interacting effectively with different audiences, especially through writing, speech, and a second language
- **Information Literacy and Intentional Learning:** (identified (but not defined) as meta-goals)

The Assessment Process

The assessment of student learning in Advanced Writing courses took place over several quarters with a focus on collecting student work and assessing student learning for each of the four Advanced Writing Learning objectives.

AW Learning Objectives



The Office of Assessment identified a random sample of students enrolled in AW classes taught in fall 2019 and winter 2020. Faculty teaching the courses were asked to identify the assignments providing the clearest evidence of student learning for each the learning objectives (e.g., a single assignment could be chosen for more than one learning objective, if applicable).

Work was obtained from 156 students across 36 Advanced Writing courses encompassing 10 different disciplines. Student and faculty identifiers were redacted from this material before a team of eleven faculty scored the work using a rubric jointly created by the Advanced Writing FCC, faculty from the English department, and the Office of Assessment (see Appendix A). The scoring team participated in a norming session and then independently scored a portion of the student work in the summer of 2021.

The rubric included evaluative criteria for each learning objective using for most learning objectives, a four-level scale of proficiency (with “1” indicating a low score (not proficient), “2” a middle-low score, “3” a middle-high score, and “4” a high score (highly proficient)). For the remaining objectives, the coding designated whether a criterion was present or absent. Scorers were also encouraged to make a note if they did not see any evidence that a particular learning objective was being addressed in the work of the student.

Generally, in Core assessments, we hope to see that at least 75 percent of the students have achieved proficiency with rubric scores of 3 or 4. In the findings that follow, all the scores given for each learning objective were tabulated and converted into percentages.

What We Learned

Advanced Writing Assessment Results

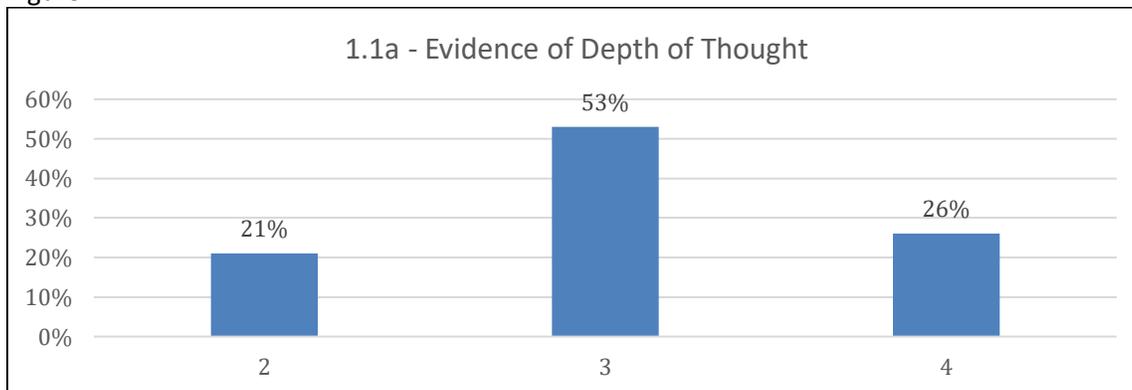
LO 1.1 Read and write with a critical point of view that displays depth of thought and is mindful of the rhetorical situation of a specific discipline.

The first learning objective was assessed via a rubric that separated out its two dimensions: 1) evidence of depth of thought, and 2) use of genre and disciplinary conventions. Scorers coded each dimension separately to determine how well students met the learning objective using the scale of 1-4 described above.

Key finding: Overall, over three-quarters of student work met the standard sought for reading and writing with a critical point of view that displays depth of thought and an appropriate use of genre and disciplinary conventions.

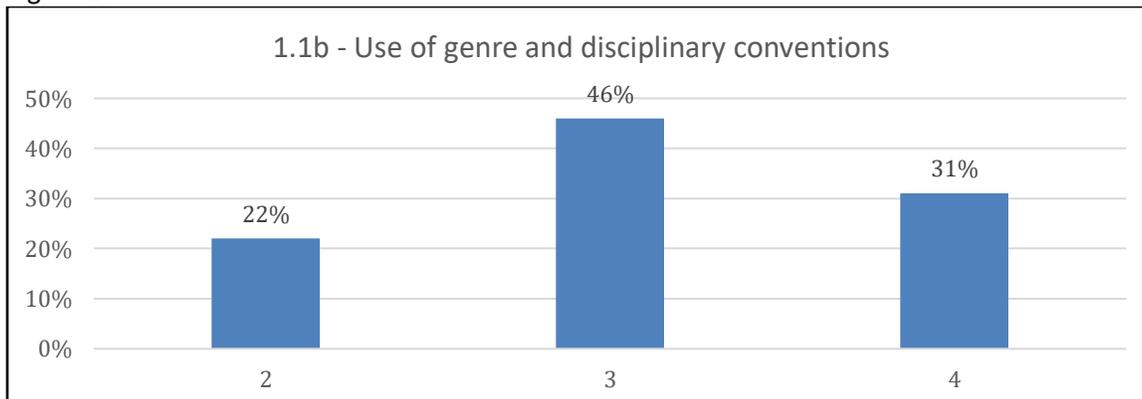
More specifically, seventy-nine percent (79%) of student work earned a 3 or a 4 (middle-high or high) on the first dimension of the learning objective assessed. This showed that the central purpose is well or adequately developed with evidence of critical, careful thought and analysis and/or insight (See Figure 1).

Figure 1.



Seventy-seven percent (77%) of student work earned a 3 or a 4 on the second dimension of the learning objective), showing at minimum a consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.



LO 1.2 Compose texts that demonstrate intellectual and creative rigor, engagement, and clear purpose.

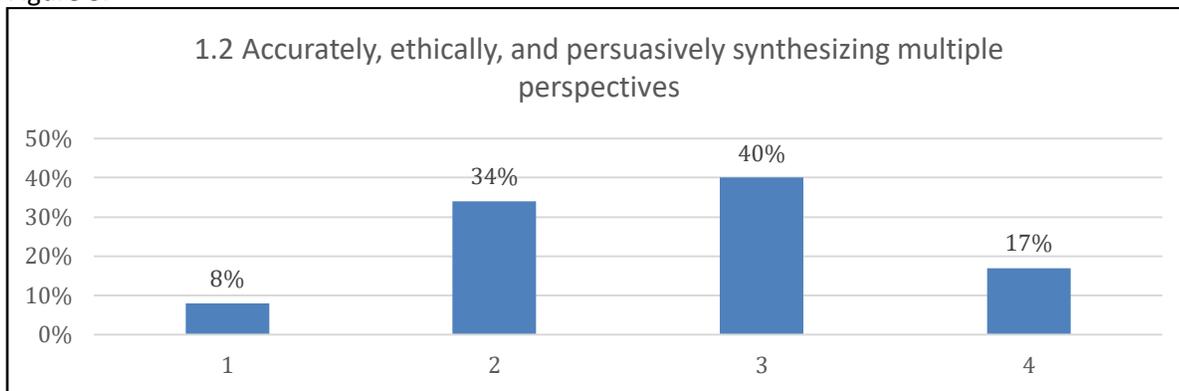
Using a similar 1-4 scoring systems, the results show that:

Key finding: Over half of the students met the AW expectations for this outcome, and another third approached but did not meet expectations.

More specifically, 57 percent of student work earned a 3 or a 4 (middle-high or high), indicating that students are including multiple outside perspectives/ideas (i.e., sources) relevant to the topic/project and treating these ideas with sophistication, including getting into their nuances/complexities and offering evaluation of them to indicate how valid the student finds the sources and positioning them relative to the purpose of the text. (See Figure 3).

Additionally, 34 percent of the work was scored as a 2 (middle-low), indicating that although it includes multiple sources, the coverage is simplistic and/or lacking in detail, fails to illustrate what each source adds to the purpose of the text, and presents little evidence that the writer is relating ideas to one another (i.e., source-based writing reads like an annotated bibliography in paragraph form).

Figure 3.



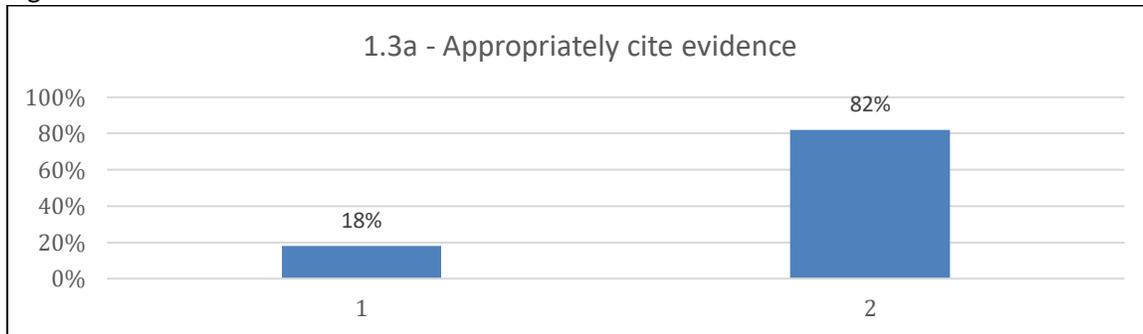
LO 1.3 Independently locate, deliberately select, and appropriately use and cite evidence that is ample, credible, and smoothly integrated into an intellectually honest text appropriate for a particular discipline.

The third learning objective was assessed on three separate dimensions. First, raters judged whether the evidence in the work was cited appropriately (scored as present or absent). Then raters provided a score of 1-4 on the next two dimensions: evidence is ample and credible, and evidence is contextualized and smoothly integrated. Originally, there was an additional dimension that the raters planned to apply to student work: “Uses of evidence are appropriate for a particular discipline,” but the assessment team determined it was too difficult to make judgments about what constitutes “reliable, authoritative and high-quality evidence to support claims,” especially when scoring in a discipline different from one’s own.

Key finding: Overall, the vast majority of students demonstrate or meet the expectation for source attribution and citation, and with over two-thirds meeting the expectations for including evidence that is ample and credible and for presenting evidence that is contextualized and smoothly integrated.

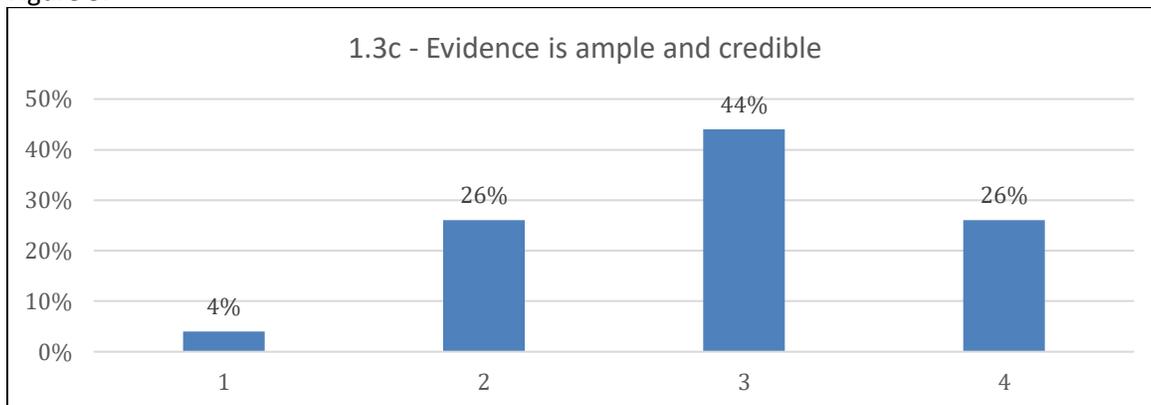
Specifically, 82 percent of students showed evidence of citing work appropriately, meeting the criterion by attributing and citing most or all sources consistent with one style manual, appropriate for the modality, in-text and in the references. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4.



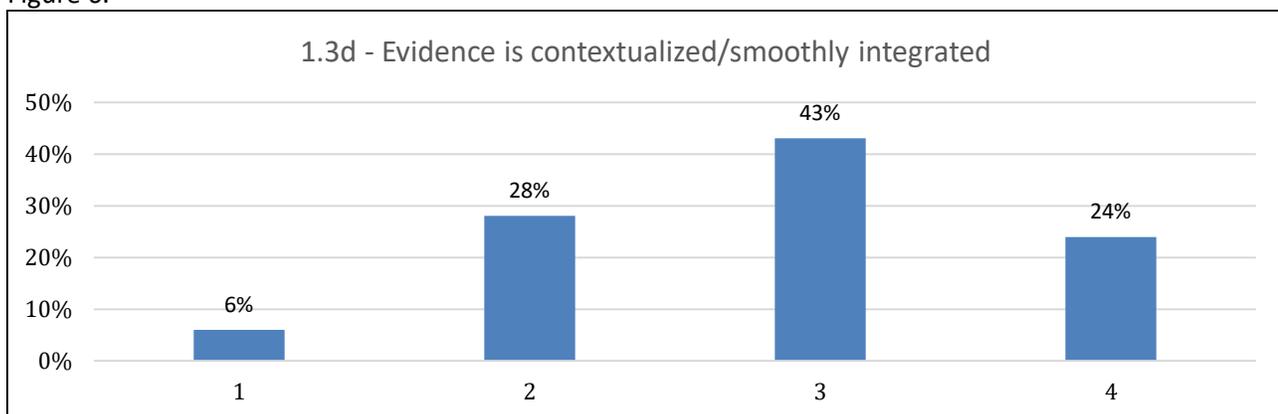
Seventy percent of student work earned a 3 or a 4 showing that most or all of the evidence presented was relevant, reliable, and authoritative, and sufficient to support claims. (Figure 5).

Figure 5.



About two-thirds (67%) of student work earned a 3 or a 4, indicating that students generally or consistently introduced and explicated relevant data or evidence. (Figure 6).

Figure 6.



LO 1.4 Demonstrate an understanding of their writing processes as modes of learning and intentionally manipulate those processes in response to diverse learning tasks.

Rather than examining student work directly, a subset of coders reviewed course syllabi and assignments to look at the degree to which faculty employed methods of scaffolding, helping students develop their writing in stages using strategies such as pre-writing, proposals, annotated bibliographies, and drafts.

Key finding: Nearly all syllabi or assignments (95%) provided evidence of scaffolding with assignments and strategies in place to help students to develop their writing in stages.

Coders also added explanatory notes about the ways in which faculty supported this work. The strongest indicators found in syllabi and assignments encouraged students, as LO 1.4 intends, to "demonstrate understanding of their writing processes as modes of learning" AND "intentionally manipulate those processes."

Several different practices were observed in syllabi and assignments that supported students' ability to meet this learning objective. Many faculty broke longer writing projects down into multiple drafts, stages, or a process. Some instructors helped students identify key practices/artifacts within a particular discipline. The courses that the coders identified as especially supportive of this learning objective made sure students got feedback from peers and the instructor at each stage. These courses also tended to provide prompts for each stage of the assignment that described ways that students could successfully complete each component. Courses that only minimally fulfilled the objective tended to provide opportunities for students to get feedback between first and final drafts of a project without much more scaffolding. Some instructors encouraged students to visit the HUB Writing Center or choose which assignments to complete, or as needed, urged students to request extensions of the due dates for assignments. The strongest evidence of syllabi/assignments addressing this dimension of LO 1.4 came from structured opportunities to design writing processes, opportunities to opt in/out of some tasks, opportunities to revisit some tasks, or revise original plans.

The strongest evidence of syllabi/assignments addressing the metacognitive ability of understanding one's own writing process came from students directly reflecting on their writing/production (such as in artist statements); commentaries on work produced; "reflection" statements; statements of revision; or some other evidence that students are systematically documenting their writing processes. Some instructors engage in one-on-one dialogues with students about developing writing, and these individual meetings can provide opportunities for students to "demonstrate understanding of their writing processes."

Providing an overall assessment of AW student writing

Part of the scoring process asked each rater to provide an overall rating for each student's writing based on the work that had been submitted, using a 4-point scale from lowest to highest.

Key finding: Over two-thirds of the students (70%) received scores of 3 or 4, 29% received a 2, and just one student artifact received a 1.

These scores can be seen as providing a more holistic evaluation of students' work in Advanced Writing across the many types of disciplines represented by this requirement, and this summative score comes close to the expected level of proficiency of 75 percent that was established as a target for student outcomes.

Scorers then identified up to five elements (from a total of 6 elements) that had most affected their score, whether in a positive or negative direction (See Table 1). As can be seen in the table, coders identified many elements that were important in their ratings, but they identified “evidence of depth of thought” and “use of genre and disciplinary conventions” as contributing most *positively* to their overall evaluation of students’ writing.

Conversely, when identifying what contributed more negatively to an overall evaluation, three elements: “accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives;” “evidence is ample and credible;” and “evidence is contextualized and smoothly integrated” appeared with somewhat greater frequency. This may finding may be best explained by the different expectations of various genres included in the AW Core area, and how well our definitions and scoring criteria are aligned with these.

The sixth element (“Evidence that writing process is seen as a process of learning that can be manipulated in response to diverse tasks”) was not included within the rubrics in the evaluation of student work. Thus, perhaps it is not surprising that it received the fewest mentions both positive and negative.

Table 1.

Specific Elements Contributing to Overall Scores	MOST POSITIVE - Percent of cases	MOST NEGATIVE – Percent of cases
1. Evidence of depth of thought: Analysis/argument/interpretation create a compelling position	60%	28%
2. Use of genre and disciplinary conventions	51%	21%
3. Accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives	32%	41%
4. Evidence is ample and credible	33%	40%
5. Evidence is contextualized/smoothly integrated	30%	36%
6. Evidence that writing process is seen as a process of learning that can be manipulated in response to diverse tasks	26%	16%

Conclusions and Discussion

The assessment shows that students are meeting or progressing well toward achieving some of the Core learning objectives for Advanced Writing. Most students (about three-fourths or more) demonstrate evidence of depth of thought (LO 1.1a), are able to use genre and disciplinary conventions (LO 1.1b), and cite evidence appropriately (LO 1.3a.) The majority (about two-thirds) provide evidence that is ample and credible (LO 1.3c) and evidence that is contextualized/smoothly integrated (LO 1.3d). While over half (57%) of students demonstrate that they are able to accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesize multiple perspectives, over a third (34%) are approaching this proficiency, but not quite there. Their work shows an ability to integrate multiple outside perspectives and ideas, but they may struggle to treat these ideas with sophistication, identify their nuances or complexities, or address how valid the students find those outside sources relative to the purpose of their texts.

The analysis of course syllabi and/or assignments shows that most faculty provide opportunities for scaffolding in their AW courses and are expecting students to develop their writing in stages (LO 1.4). The strongest syllabi/assignments show evidence of breaking larger writing assignments into stages/steps, providing feedback at each stage, developing students' agency as designers of their own writing, and frequently inviting students' reflection on their own writing.

The assessment also revealed the need for discussing the learning objectives and our measurement in light of the variation of disciplines represented in Advanced Writing. Some of the most engaging and challenging discussions among coders who participated in the assessment occurred as a result of the great variation with which faculty and disciplines interpreted the AW Core curriculum requirement. Specifically, some syllabi and assignments seemed to align well with the AW rubrics, others did so very little or inconsistently. For example, some assignments seem to have required extensive engagement with information literacy-based skills (like skillful uses of outside sources); others were more introspective, persuasive, or creative pieces that required students to demonstrate other writing strengths. The decision among coders not to code for LO 1.3b (Uses of evidence are appropriate for a particular discipline) reflects these differences across the disciplines.

There will be value for those teaching AW courses and the AW FCC continue to explore further what students' demonstration of the AW learning objectives looks like across the disciplines in which AW courses are offered. As faculty take another look at the current learning objectives and the rubric, our scoring team wondered about whether some courses fit well with AW as it's currently defined, or alternatively, whether the learning objectives and rubric are too narrow for the scope of an advanced writing course—especially in certain disciplinary areas.

As an example of this last point, we note that only 57 percent of students scored proficiently on LO 1.2 and additionally, the rubric scores from multiple raters were less consistent (see Appendix B). Faculty teaching AW and raters in future assessments may need to focus more attention on the definition and clarifying understanding of this objective, and its meaning for various disciplines. LO1.2 states students will "*Compose texts that demonstrate intellectual and creative rigor, engagement, and clear purpose,*" but the rubric directed raters to judge the level by which a student's work "Accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives (emphasizing complexity & critical thinking in view of AW's focus on discipline/field-informed writing and information literacy)." One of the raters noted that "as I rated samples, I found this definition did not always serve expressive forms of disciplinary writing. For example, I scored several screenplays which demonstrated "intellectual and creative rigor, engagement, and clear purpose" without 'accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives.'"

In conclusion, the assessment provides a number of issues that are important for further discussion, while also affirming that students are showing strong evidence of critical thinking and disciplinary proficiency. In addition to the AW courses, it is also important for all academic programs to consider how they might provide additional discipline-based opportunities for students to practice selecting outside sources that are ample and credible, contextualizing those sources, and synthesizing the multiple perspectives contained within those sources with sophistication and nuance in their own texts.

Acknowledgments: Educational Assessment thanks the AW FCC, the faculty teaching Core courses who participated in the assessment, the faculty members who participated as scorers for the student work, and our student assistants in the Office of Assessment who contribute to the many stages of the assessment process.

LO 1.1 - Read and write with a critical point of view that displays depth of thought and is mindful of the rhetorical situation of a specific discipline (Critical Thinking, Complexity, Communication)					
	Highest -4	Middle high-3	Middle low-2	Lowest-1	Score
a. Evidence of depth of thought: Analysis/argument / interpretation create a compelling position	Central purpose is well developed with an abundance of evidence of critical, careful thought and analysis and/or insight. Appropriate for the discipline or genre.	Central idea is adequately developed with sufficient evidence and/or analysis. Evidence demonstrates some insight into the problem being explored. Appropriate for the discipline or genre.	Central idea is present, but inadequately developed or substantiated by evidence and/or analysis. Appropriate for the discipline or genre.	Central idea is poorly developed or absent. Not clearly connected to the discipline or genre.	
b. Use of genre and disciplinary conventions	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices.	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices.	Follows some expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation. Use of disciplinary conventions is not always successful or apparent.	Does not follow genre or disciplinary conventions.	
LO 1.2 - Compose texts that demonstrate intellectual and creative rigor, engagement, and clear purpose (Critical Thinking, Complexity, Communication)					
	Highest -4	Middle high-3	Middle low-2	Lowest-1	Score
Accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives (emphasizing complexity & critical thinking in view of AW's focus on discipline/field-informed writing and information literacy)	Includes multiple outside perspectives/ideas (i.e., sources) relevant to the topic/project. Treats these ideas with sophistication, getting into their nuances/complexities and offering evaluation	Includes multiple outside perspectives/ideas (i.e., sources) relevant to the topic/project. Treats these ideas with sophistication, getting into their nuances/complexities and offering evaluation of them (either implicitly or explicitly) to indicate how valid the	Includes multiple sources but the coverage is simplistic and/or lacking in detail, failing to illustrate what each source adds to the purpose of the text. Little evidence that writer is relating ideas to one another (i.e., source-based writing reads like an	May include outside sources, but their relevance to the topic is not clear, OR the number of sources (ideas/perspectives) is very limited or overly reliant on 1-2 sources, leading to a text that lacks rigor.	

<p>Note: satisfying this LO can (and should) incorporate writers' own perspectives (via source selection and evaluation), but central to this LO is representing and relating the relevant ideas of others (i.e., sources). Sources can be either course texts (assigned readings, etc.) or independently-selected texts.</p>	<p>of them (either implicitly or explicitly) to indicate how valid the student finds the sources and positioning them relative to the purpose of the text. Outside sources construct a coherent overview/narrative demonstrating how these ideas are related to each other, and, as appropriate, give the reader a sense of the existing conversation about the topic.</p>	<p>student finds the sources and positioning them relative to the purpose of the text. Evidence that writer has integrated the sources.</p>	<p>annotated bibliography in paragraph form).</p>	<p>engagement, and clear purpose.</p>	
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LO 1.3 Independently locate, deliberately select, and appropriately use and cite evidence that is ample, credible, and smoothly integrated into an intellectually honest text appropriate for a particular discipline (Complexity, Communication, Information Literacy)					
	Highest -4	Middle high-3	Middle low-2	Lowest-1	Score
<p>a. Appropriately cite evidence</p>	<p>Present: Attributes and cites most or all sources consistent with one style manual, appropriate for the modality, in-text and in the references</p>	<p>Don't use</p>	<p>Don't use</p>	<p>Absent: Attributes and cites few or no sources in-text or in references, or there is substantial inconsistency in citation frequency or style</p>	<p>Score as P or A (present/absent)</p>
<p>b. Evidence is ample and credible</p>	<p>All evidence is relevant, reliable, and authoritative, providing strong support for claims.</p>	<p>Most evidence is relevant, reliable, and authoritative, and sufficient to support claims.</p>	<p>Some evidence lacks relevance, reliability, and authoritativeness and/or is not sufficient to support claims.</p>	<p>Little to no relevant, reliable, or authoritative evidence to support claims.</p>	
<p>c. Evidence is contextualized/s smoothly integrated</p>	<p>Writing consistently introduces, and explicates (i.e., frames/contextualizes relevant primary</p>	<p>Writing generally introduces, and explicates (i.e., frames/contextualizes relevant primary</p>	<p>Writing occasionally introduces and/or explicates (i.e., frames/contextualizes relevant primary</p>	<p>Writing never integrates evidence, or never introduces or explicates (i.e., frames/contextualizes)</p>	

Appendix A: AW Scoring rubric for coders

Revised July 20, 2021

	data/evidence (e.g., direct quotes, statistics)	data/evidence (e.g., direct quotes, statistics)	data/evidence (e.g., direct quotes, statistics)	relevant primary data/evidence (e.g., direct quotes, statistics)	
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	From syllabus/assignments	Score
Evidence that writing process is seen as a process of learning that can be manipulated in response to diverse tasks	Evidence of scaffolding, and that student is developing writing in stages using strategies such as pre-writing, proposals, annotated bibliographies, drafts.	Score as P or A (present/absent)

OVERALL Score and rationale					
	Highest -4	Middle high-3	Middle low-2	Lowest-1	Score
Overall, what rating would you give this students' writing based on the work submitted for AW?					

Code up to 5 elements that had the most POSITIVE impact on your overall rating. Use the numbers below to indicate your choices on the scoring sheet in the designated areas
1. Evidence of depth of thought: Analysis/argument/ interpretation create a compelling position
2. Use of genre and disciplinary conventions
3. Accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives
4. Evidence is ample and credible
5. Evidence is contextualized/smoothly integrated
6. Evidence that writing process is seen as a process of learning that can be manipulated in response to diverse tasks
7. Other (open response)

Code up to 5 elements that had the most NEGATIVE impact on your overall rating. Use the numbers below to indicate your choices on the scoring sheet in the designated areas
1. Evidence of depth of thought: Analysis/argument/ interpretation create a compelling position
2. Use of genre and disciplinary conventions
3. Accurately, ethically, and persuasively synthesizing multiple perspectives
4. Evidence is ample and credible
5. Evidence is contextualized/smoothly integrated
6. Evidence that writing process is seen as a process of learning that can be manipulated in response to diverse tasks
7. Other (open response)

APPENDIX B: Interrater Reliability

In order to check on the reliability of the rubric scoring, 32 student artifacts were double scored by the faculty participants. Overall, the percentage of scores that were the same (or 1 apart) was quite high for Learning Outcomes 1.1a, 1.1b, and 1.3d. The percentage of scores that were the same (or 1 apart) was slightly lower for 1.2 and 1.3c, indicating a little less agreement on those two.

Total 'Absolute Difference' - Percentages by row						
Row Labels	0	1	2	3	Grand Total	Percent of 0 or 1 difference by LO
LO_1_1a	47%	44%	9%		32	91%
LO_1_1b	41%	53%	6%		32	94%
LO_1_2	31%	44%	22%	3%	32	75%
LO_1_3c	44%	38%	13%	6%	32	81%
LO_1_3d	34%	56%	9%		32	91%
Grand Total	63	75	19	3	160	

We also ran GWET's AC2 on each of double-scored student artifacts and the interrater reliability coefficients were very good (70% or higher) using simple ordinal weights for Learning Outcomes 1.1a, 1.1b, and 1.3d. The reliability coefficients were more middling for Learning Outcomes 1.2 and 1.3c (.4 and .51), just as the percentages in the table above would suggest.