

## Assessment Report

(Writing 1.1)

May 2015

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### Background:

To assess the writing GLO, GEAC collected samples of student writing from all courses tagged with the 1.1 outcome: this includes FSEM, ENGL 101/109, and JSEM.

#### Changes in curriculum, procedures, and rubrics since 2009.

Since 2009, Stetson’s Gen Ed Writing curriculum has expanded to include JSEMs. The number of FSEMs offered has grown considerably; they are also now offered by Business (SoBA) and Music (SoM) in addition to A&S. ENGL 109 has been added to the General Education Writing requirement for some transfer students, with a designated Writing Intensive course required for other transfer students. (These WI courses have not been scheduled for assessment.) Finally, the mastery level sites of sampling in SoBA and SoM were refined to identify more appropriate courses and artifacts to better assess writing mastery.

The changes to the Gen Ed writing curriculum, in conjunction with the identification of multiple sites for mastery level sampling, have had the effect of broadening, expanding, and complicating the process of writing assessment considerably: nearly a dozen courses in SoBA were newly identified for sampling, while in SoM, an additional 6 courses were identified as more suitable for mastery level sampling. A&S continues to sample senior projects as they are still considered appropriate sites for measuring mastery level disciplinary writing. At the same time, however, discussions within GEAC and across the Schools and College began to question whether mastery level disciplinary writing should be included in General Education Assessment of writing. The professional schools and the College do not have parallel expectations for mastery writing, nor do either of SoBA or SoM have parallel expectations to the senior research projects most often seen in the College of Arts & Sciences. Moreover, the nature of the mastery level outcome itself—as an ultimate representation of student learning in the major—is deeply disciplinary, and is therefore unsuitable for study through the General Education Assessment Committee.

Thus it seems impossible to generate a true picture of Stetson’s General Education Outcome 1.1 Writing at the mastery level. *The impact of this discussion means that while we had intended to produce an assessment report from first to fourth years, we are revising that expectation to sample only the General Education required courses tagged with Writing outcomes: FSEM, ENGL 101/109, and JSEM. No data about mastery level writing samples are included in this report.*

(While true to disciplinary priorities, this new clarity should not be taken to mean that Stetson cannot assess writing at the mastery level; it does mean, however, that A&S and the Schools of Music and Business must, in order to meet Stetson’s assessment goals, develop and

pursue their own internal assessments of writing based on their disciplinary expectations and curriculum.)

### **Learning Outcome and Rubric**

The rubric for assessment has been refined. Originally a three-level rubric of achievement (categories of “below,” “meets,” and “exceeds expectations”), GEAC acted on the recommendations of the 2009 assessors to identify a four-level rubric (“unacceptable,” “developing,” “proficient,” and “exemplary”) to more effectively distinguish mid-range levels of achievement. That is, the 2009 rubric offered two levels we agreed would be acceptable results (meets and exceeds), with one level we identified as not acceptable (below expectations). The 4-level rubric, in contrast, offers two levels of acceptable results (proficient and exemplary) and two levels below acceptable (unacceptable and developing). This shift in measuring systems makes new results difficult to compare to the 2009 results and complicates the reporting of results to the Stetson faculty.

Therefore, for the 2013-14 assessment, GEAC used two different rubrics. The 3-level rubric was used on JSEM writing artifacts so that the measuring system was consistent: the 3-level rubric was the same rubric on which the samples from this class of students were assessed as first year students, making results across 2009 and 2013 simpler to record, study, and report. The 4-level rubric was used on the first year artifacts drawn from FSEM and ENGL 101/109. This rubric is also consistent with the rest of the assessment rubrics used by GEAC. We expect this 4-level rubric to be the standard set of measures used to assess student learning outcomes, and in 2017, when the third round of writing assessment begins, all student samples will be assessed with the 4-level rubric. (see attached.)

### **Assessment Process**

Samples of student writing were drawn from all 2013-14 sections of FSEM, ENGL 101/109, and JSEM. The Office of Institutional Research generated randomized lists of student names from these selected courses. Faculty teaching the selected students were asked to choose the best writing done by the student in the latter part of the semester and to submit these artifacts, with identifying marks removed, to the GEAC subcommittee. Artifacts were collected, made anonymous where necessary, and collated for scoring. During two separate reading sessions (December 2013 and December 2014), the assessment teams read sample artifacts to calibrate on the rubrics and then performed the assessment. Each artifact was read twice. In cases when readers disagreed categorically (rather than within categories of achievement), they were asked to decide on a score.

### **Previous Results:**

Stetson University’s Gen Ed curriculum map currently positions Writing instruction at first year (FSEM and ENGL 101/109) and third year (JSEM). The Fall 2009 Writing assessment, which sampled students from FSEM/ENGL 101 and from mastery level revealed that **72% of the samples met or exceeded expectations**. When the data were disaggregated, we found that

of the FSEM papers assessed, 82% met or exceeded expectations. Of the ENGL 101 artifacts assessed, 65% met or exceeded expectations. At the **mastery level, 76% overall met or exceeded expectations**. When we disaggregated the data, we found that in A&S, 90% of the senior projects [n=20] met or exceeded expectations; 53% of the SoBA artifacts [n=15] met or exceeded expectations; and 100% of SoM's senior artifacts [n= 3] met or exceeded expectations. This result represented a marginal increase in skill level after four years of a Stetson education.

#### Summary Table of Results, Fall 2009

Fall 2009	FY combined (n=59)	FSEM (n=28)	ENGL 101 (n=26)	Mastery (n=38)
Below expectations	28%	18%	34.5%	24%
Meets/Exceeds expectations	72%	82%	65%	76%

The 2009 results were somewhat lower than GEAC's goals (80% meets or exceeds for first year and 90% meets or exceeds for senior). GEAC identified the achievement gap as a result of a "murky middle" of writing instruction, a phenomenon well understood in writing studies. To improve mastery level assessment results, GEAC recommended incorporating more planned writing instruction between first and fourth years. We anticipated that with the roll out of the JSEM course, and with the addition of formally designated, optional writing intensive courses at the first, second, and third years, student outcomes would improve in the 2013-2014 Writing assessment.

#### Results 2013-2014:

Table 1. Results of the assessment of Writing from courses taught in Fall and Spring semesters 2013-2014.

#### 2013-2014 Total

2013-2014	FY combined (fall + spring)	FSEM	ENGL 101/109 (fall + spring)	JSEM (fall + spring)
<i>n</i>	<b>79</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>49</b>
Below expectations	27.85%	37.50%	23.64%	16.34%
Meets/exceeds expectations	72.15%	62.50%	76.36%	83.66%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

The raw numbers indicate that 72% of the students performed at an acceptable or exemplary writing levels in their first year, with 83% performing at acceptable or exemplary

levels in their third year. As noted above, GEAC will not collect or assess writing at the mastery level.

However, some significant points need further discussion. The tables below break down the aggregate results into the semester results.

#### Summary Table of Results Fall 2013

Fall 2013	FY combined (n=48)	FSEM (n=24)	ENGL 101/109 (n=24)	JSEM (n=24)
Below expectations	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%	4.2%
Meets/exceeds expectations	62.5%	62.5%	62.5%	95.8%

#### Summary Table of Results Spring 2014

<i>Spring 2014</i>	ENGL 101 & 109 (n=31)		JSEM (n=25)	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Below expectations	4	12.9%	7	28.0%
Meets/exceeds expectations	27	87.1%	18	72.0%

1. Achievement results in ENGL 101/109 are significantly different from semester to semester. The aggregate results indicate that overall, students exiting ENGL 101 are meeting the expectations in higher numbers (76%) than those in FSEM (62.5%). Examining the semester results, however, reveals that in Fall, only 62.5% of ENGL 101 samples met or exceeded the expectations, whereas in Spring, more than 87% of ENGL 101 samples met or exceeded the expectations.

This dramatically higher spring number of successful samples is, most likely, the cumulative effect of several courses at Stetson; students are far better prepared to meet the outcome statement after a year at Stetson than they are after one semester. This result is not surprising, but it bears repeating given that on the surface, and in contrast to the Fall 2009 assessment results, ENGL 101 looks more successful at meeting the Writing outcome than FSEM.

We should also note that while some students come to their FSEM with extensive writing at the college level, which would presumably heighten their chances of success in FSEM writing and therefore spike the numbers somewhat, students placed into ENGL 100 College Writing, a developmental level course, are also taking FSEM

simultaneously. When those ENGL 100 students take ENGL 101 in their spring semester, therefore, they have already completed at least two Writing or writing intensive courses. The FSEM, then, remains pivotal in student success rates. What we are most likely seeing in these results is that the writing intensive first year experience at Stetson, and specifically the FSEM requirement, is significant for student acquisition of writing skills.

2. Achievement results in JSEM are different from semester to semester as well. The aggregate results suggest that overall, 83% of the samples from students exiting JSEM are meeting the outcome expectations; however, when individual semester data are examined, a nearly 25 point difference can be seen: In fall, 90.5% of the samples met or exceeded expectations, while in the spring, that number drops to 72%.

Because JSEMs are offered every semester, and because we are not aware of any other systemic, complicating, or mitigating factors, the semester breakdown may not be as useful here as it is with the first year courses. A number of elements may explain the drop in achievement: however, our primary culprits are probably student fatigue and faculty fatigue at the end of a long academic year.

3. Achievement results in FSEM from 2009 to 2013 differ strikingly. In 2009, FSEM samples met the outcome statement at 82%, while in 2013, FSEM samples met the outcome statement at only 62%.

This result bears further examination: it may indicate lower levels of preparedness in incoming students, or that samples were inappropriately chosen for assessment. The results may also indicate a lack of consistency in FSEM courses as a consequence of a greatly expanded number of FSEMs with widely varying rates of preparedness in instructors. These traits represent a distinct difference from Fall 2009, when the FSEM faculty were almost without exception A&S faculty familiar with and experienced at teaching with writing, who had also benefitted from substantial amounts of workshop and faculty development time focused on the teaching of writing. The Fall 2013 FSEM faculty are a larger group, a much more diversely prepared group, and a group who have not, in comparison with the Fall 2009 FSEM faculty, received concentrated workshop or faculty development time on effectively using writing in the learning process or on teaching writing as a distinct skill set.

### **Recommendations For GEAC:**

Although GEAC was in possession of sufficient data to perform the assessment as scheduled during spring semester, no faculty readers committed themselves to joining the assessment initiative; this obstacle was overcome in Spring of 2014, but full analysis of the results was not performed until Spring of 2015.

The nature of writing assessment makes faculty engagement essential, yet our current quantitative emphasis—only on measuring success—may be deflecting faculty who would otherwise be interested in our assessment procedures. Current discussions among writing faculty and within GEAC seem to suggest that an increased emphasis on

qualitative assessment—investigating how we achieve our results rather than reporting only on our achievement rates—may remedy the lack of faculty engagement.

**Recommendations For UGEC:**

It seems confirmed, in two rounds of Gen Ed writing assessment, that our first year curriculum—in that it requires students to take 2 or more writing or writing intensive courses in two semesters—is transformative for student learning. This confirmation may signal that the current proposal before the faculty (to revise the Writing requirement from one course to five courses and remove ENGL 101) should consider a proviso wherein students are required to take one or more WI courses in the first year. This is a de facto policy at the moment: students are already required to take FSEM, and nearly all students take a HIST course in their first year as well. Since nearly all HIST courses are WI designated, we know that most students are already taking two WI courses in their first year. We may want to discuss mandating that, which would trigger a number of additional first year courses with the WI designation.