

Overall Summary of GES1: Write to communicate and clarify learning

1/14/2014

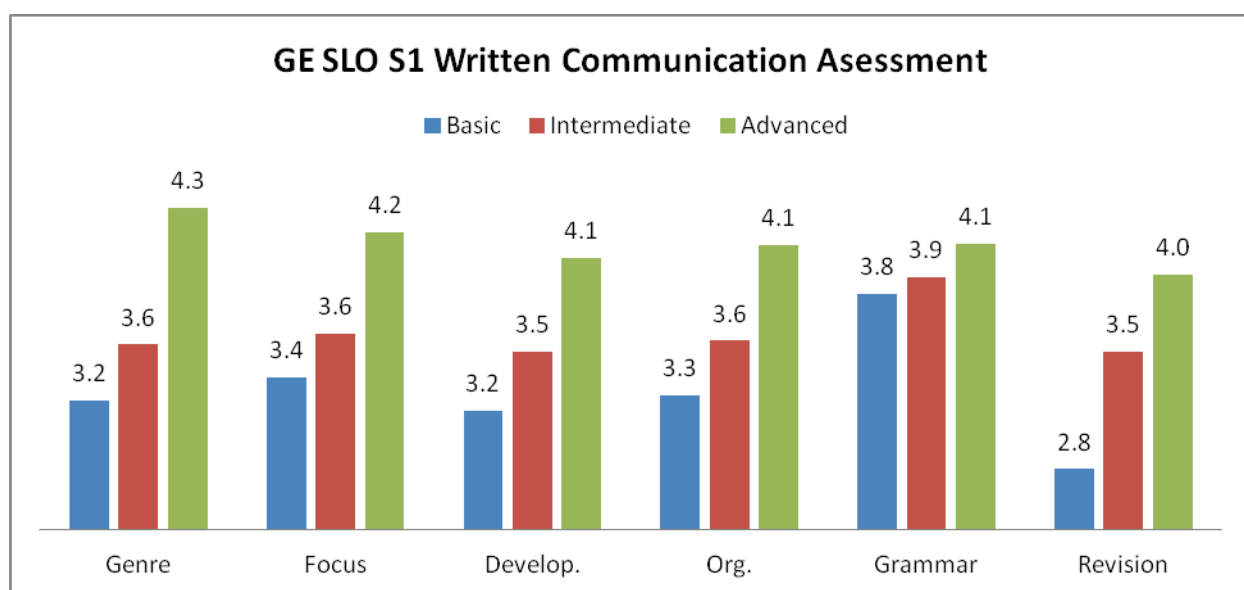
For Fall 2013, the Standard Kean University Writing rubric was used to assess writing for three courses: College Composition, Research and Technology, and Capstone courses, which respectively assess writing at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced level. For College Composition, the sample included 120 students (90 from ENG1030 post test and 30 from ENG1031 post test) from 60 different course sections from two types of courses, which are similar in all regards except in one course (EN 1031/32), students receive additional class time. Although the two composition courses were assessed separately, the difference between their scores is small and thus averaged in the following discussion. For Research and Technology, the sample included 541 students from 28 sections; and for Capstone courses, 558 students from 39 sections. The rubric uses a 1-5 scale and measures six categories in writing: genre/audience, focus, development, organization, grammar, and revision. Within these six categories, focus, development, and organization are considered high-order issues.

GE SLO S1 Written Communication Average Score						
Course/level	Genre	Focus	Develop.	Org.	Grammar	Revision
Basic	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.8	2.8
Intermediate	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.5
Advanced	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.0
Difference between Basic & Intermediate	0.32	0.25	0.33	0.31	0.10	0.67
Difference between Basic & advanced	1.10	0.83	0.87	0.86	0.29	1.11

Basic level ENG 1030/1031

Intermediate Level GE202x

Advanced Capstone



For each category, there was an improvement from one level to the next. From introductory to advanced, genre/audience increased from 3.2 to 4.3; focus from 3.4 to 4.2; development 3.2 to 4.1; organization from 3.3 to 4.1; grammar from 3.8 to 4.1; revision from 2.8 to 4. Thus, grammar, which is a small-order issue, started at higher level and has the least amount of improvement (.28), yet still remains high. Revision refers to substantive changes between drafts of student writing, in which material has been cut, added, moved, or substituted, rather than surface level changes, in which style, diction, syntax, or grammar has been changed without affecting the ideas that are being conveyed. Revision improved the most. In future assessments, the gap between introductory and advanced revision should possibly diminish (1.1), given that the GES1 report for composition indicates revision as an area needing improvement, and action has been taken to improve revision at this level: two workshops were recently offered to instructors on how to respond to student writing in ways that encourage substantive revision, and, secondly, instructors received hands-on training in electronic responding. Revision is the only category in which the greater portion of the increase occurred between introductory and intermediate level (0.67). This possibly indicates Research and Technology's recent emphasis on revision and/or the need for greater emphasis on revision in Composition.

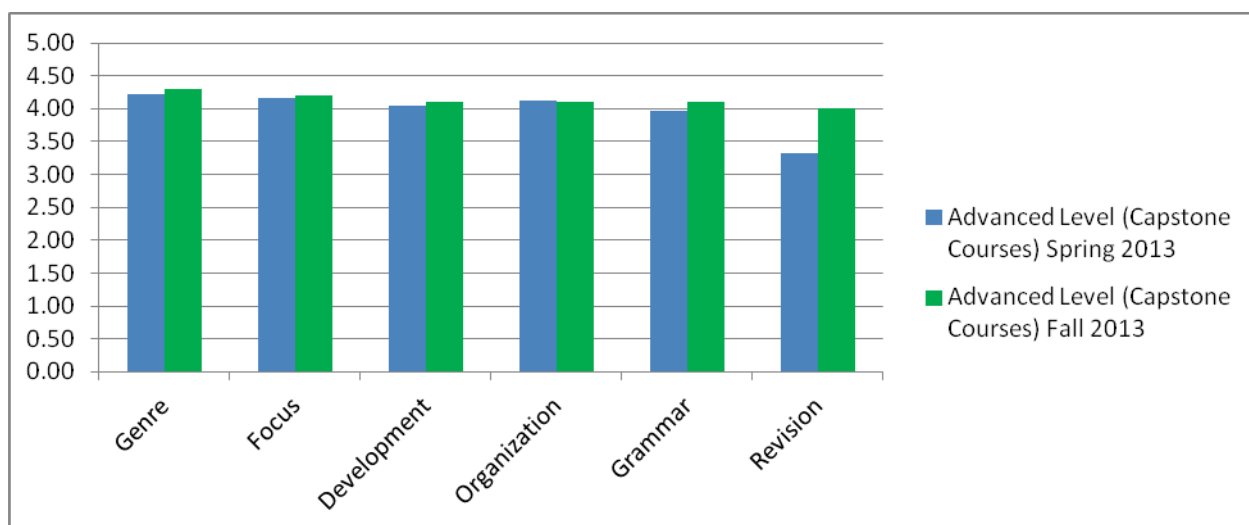
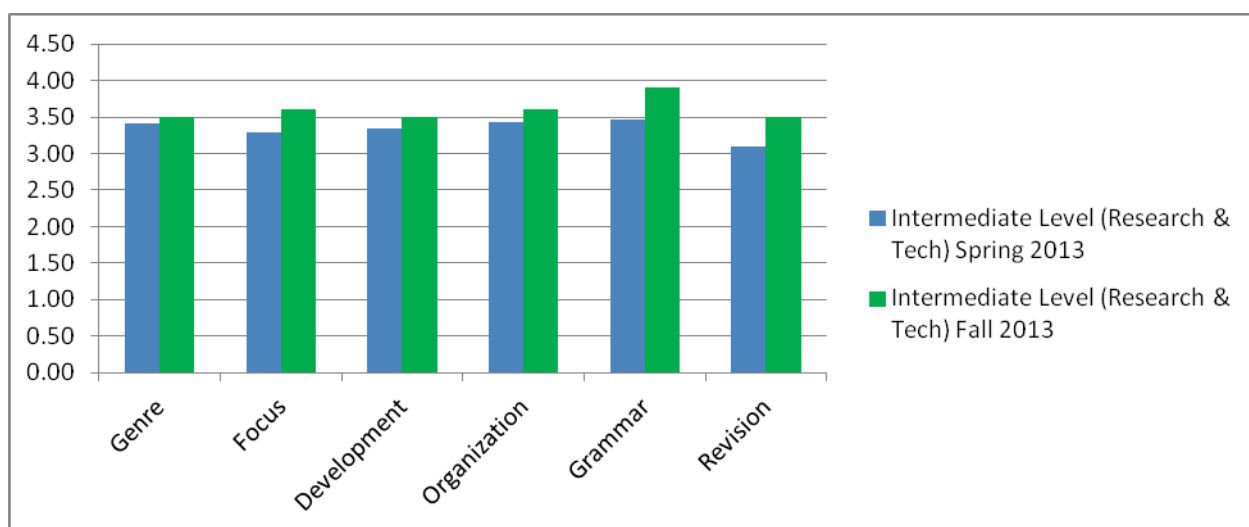
Furthermore, genre/audience also reveals a solid improvement. Yet the increase from introductory to intermediate (0.32) is smaller than the increase from intermediate to advanced (1.1). The larger increase possibly indicates that students have been working in their majors for multiple semesters, and thus learning genre/audience expectations in preparation for the capstone in their major. The smaller increase possibly reflects that Research and Technology provides an introduction to students writing in their particular major; thus, at this level, students are not yet familiar with genre/audience expectations. The high-order issues of focus, development, and organization all made similar improvements (approximately 0.9) from introductory to advanced level with the greater portion of the increase (.6) occurring between intermediate to advanced. To determine whether there is indeed a lag in increase between the introductory and intermediate level, perhaps a fourth point of assessment could be conducted between the intermediate and advanced levels or, rather, at the junior level.

Overall, the assessment tells a positive story of improvement in every category. As a side note, however, this improvement could reflect the different make-up of students at the advanced level. Students at the introductory level may not have succeeded to the advanced level. Thus, individual tracking from introductory to advanced would provide a more accurate story of improvement.

Comparing present reports with earlier reports from Spring 2013 reveals longitudinal growth, as well as potential areas for instructional improvement. At both the intermediate and advanced levels, all categories increased from Fall 2012 to Spring 2013, except for organization at the Capstone level, which remained nearly the same in both semesters (4.1).

Criteria	Intermediate Level (Research & Tech) Spring 2013	Intermediate Level (Research & Tech) Fall 2013
Genre	3.41	3.50
Focus	3.29	3.60
Development	3.34	3.50
Organization	3.43	3.60
Grammar	3.46	3.90
Revision	3.10	3.50

Criteria	Advanced Level (Capstone Courses) Spring 2013	Advanced Level (Capstone Courses) Fall 2013
Genre	4.22	4.30
Focus	4.16	4.20
Development	4.04	4.10
Organization	4.12	4.10
Grammar	3.97	4.10
Revision	3.33	4.00



At the intermediate level, revision increased from 3.1 to 3.5. This .4 improvement was coupled with improvements of .44 in grammar and .31 in focus, while the other categories of genre/audience, development, and organization revealed small improvements, ranging from .04 to .17. This suggests that when students revised their writing, the revisions sharpened the focus and improved the grammar, but did little to improve the other categories. Thus, while one high-order issue (focus) improved, the two other high-order issues (development and organization) could be further emphasized during the revision process. One solution is that instructor comments or feedback on student papers could be targeted on these two high-order issues.

At the advanced level, revision improved solidly from 3.33 to 4.0. With this .67 increase in revision, one would expect to find increases in the other categories. However, the other categories revealed little to no change, ranging from 0 to .08. This data raises the question that if nothing improved, then what kinds of revision were made and how were they measured? In other words, despite increased revisions, students did not make substantial revisions that affected the focus, organization, or development of the essay. One possible explanation confirms the recommendation in the Fall 2012 Research and Technology report that instructors needed training in how to use the rubric. College composition already employs regular norming sessions. Additional norming would be useful at the intermediate and advanced levels. At the Capstone level, which is where the courses are more varied and possibly given to a greater likelihood of imbalanced scoring, training in the rubric across disciplines would ensure that writing is taught and measured in a consistent manner. Even so, the rubric needs to be flexible and adaptable to various disciplines. A norming session would provide Capstone faculty the opportunity to address how to make the rubric accommodate particular expectations and practices within the discipline.

Moreover, the fact that all categories except revision revealed negligible improvement indicates that instructor feedback of written work should target high-order issues. Given that Research and Technology also revealed limited growth in two of the three high-order issues, there needs to be additional training on how instructors could foster substantive revisions. At the Composition level, there is already in place regular training sessions every August on best practices regarding instructor feedback on student papers. These sessions could be extended to the intermediate and advanced levels.