

# Bergen Community College

## Assessment Report for 2008-2010

Department/Program: English Basic Skills

Department Leader: Dr. Leigh Jonaitis

Liaison: Hafiz Mahmoud

Assessment Project Coordinator (if not the Department Leader): Hafiz Mahmoud; Leigh Jonaitis

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Program(s), if applicable (AAS, Interdepartmental, etc.):

### Developmental Program

Mission/Goal statement of the department or program:

The mission of the Department of English Basic Skills is to prepare our students, with their diverse academic backgrounds, for the demands of college reading and writing, and provide them with a challenging educational experience that enhances the critical thinking skills necessary for life-long learning.

### SEMESTER 1: Create the Assessment Plan

Goal or learning objective being assessed:

Learning objective from the EBS 016/017 and 023/024 syllabi: "Students who successfully complete the work [in EBS] will be able to... write multi-paragraph papers with introductions and conclusions."

Relevant Core Competencies: (check as many as apply)

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Quantitative Reasoning                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Responsibility     | <input type="checkbox"/> Technological and Information Fluency | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Skills              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Skills     | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity and Aesthetic Appreciation | <input type="checkbox"/> Applied Knowledge            |

Means of Assessment:

An assessment team of six faculty (Don Reilly, Kelly Keane, Lori Talarico, Pamela Haji, Leigh Jonaitis, and Hafiz Mahmoud) were assigned the task of drafting the instrument to be eventually used in assessing the EBS Mastery Test (in writing), the main exit criteria for the EBS Program. The team convened several times during Fall 2009 and after careful consideration for certain variables within the department, the members eventually agreed on adopting the "holistic rubric" approach as the instrument of choice; accordingly, they outlined the format and the principles of the rubric. The assessment team also agreed that the rubric should be simple, consistent, and easy to use. However, to ensure the validity of the rubric, the team considered its design in reference to the essential components of the multi-paragraph essay. The rubric needs to assess:

- if the multi- paragraph essay includes a thesis, whether explicit or implied.

- the level of organization and the degree of coherence in the provided examples, ideas or details in the essay.
- the sophistication of the thoughts presented and appropriateness of the vocabulary used.
- the mechanics: sentence structure, tense verb agreement, appropriate use of pronouns, punctuation, and spelling.

A first draft of a 1- 6 scale of a holistic rubric in which 6,5, and 4 are the passing scores, was initially crafted by some of the team members but subjected to exhaustive discussions by whole team. In writing a second draft, the members of the assessment team considered examining the comments of the EBS faculty, previously recorded, during the process of finding "range finders" in Fall 2008 and Fall 2009. To maximize the profit of those comments, the assessment team converted the scorings of the faculty during those periods into percentages and agreed to take into consideration the comments made by the faculty in reference to a particular score (4, 3, etc.), provided that there was 2/3 (66%) agreement among the faculty pertaining that score (see Appendix 1). Eventually amendments were made on the second draft, and a third and a final draft was written and prepared for piloting.

## SEMESTER 2: Develop an Assessment Strategy

Criterion for success:

The criteria of success was a passing score on the rubric for at least 75% of the essays. After revisions of the rubric, the goal was to ultimately be able to use the rubric for EBS Mastery Test grading starting in Fall 2010.

Before conducting the final study for this assessment report, the assessment needed feedback from the entire department about the rubric draft. It therefore initiated a pilot study.

### PILOT STUDY

During the February 2010 departmental meeting, a copy of the third draft was given to each faculty in the EBS Department with a sample package of 6 essays selected from the EBS Mastery Test from Fall 2009. The purpose was to pilot the rubric by requesting the EBS faculty to use it in grading the essays and provide their comments and feedback during the EBS Summit in March. The faculty scoring results and comments were meant to be used to further revise and improve the rubric.

The pilot study gleaned valuable information about the rubric (see Appendix 2). Even though Essays 1&2 each received a solid passing score of 4 when originally graded, only 2/3 (66%) of the EBS faculty validated this score in the pilot study. There was also a split decision among the faculty regarding Essay 3. Although it received the borderline-passing score of 3, half the faculty ( 50%) up-graded the essay score to the solid passing score of 4. In reference to Essay

4, the faculty unanimously considered it a failing essay on the rubric, thus validating the previous score on the Mastery Test. However, the most intriguing results were the scores of Essays 5&6 on the rubric. It appears that the rubric helped to resolve the discrepancy of the 4/3 score. With the exception of one, all faculty seemed to lean towards one single score, either a 3 or a 4. However, it is worth mentioning that the rubric apparently worked to the advantage of Essay 6.

Dean's Comments: [REDACTED]

VP's Comments:

### SEMESTER 3: Implement Assessment Plan & Strategy

Summary and analysis of data collected:

To implement the rubric and test its reliability, the assessment team used a randomly selected sample of EBS Mastery Test essays, representing approximately 11% of the essay cohort of Fall 2009. Each essay was graded by two members and was given a combined score (scores of 7 and above were the passing scores) to determine its pass/fail status. The following results were obtained:

- Size of the sample used (essays read for the assessment project): 161 essays.

- Number of essays passed in the assessment project with a combined score of 7 and above were 120 essays, representing (75%) of the total essays read, with a margin of error of 5% [ $P > .05$ ].

- Number of essays passed in the actual reading of the Mastery Test Fall 2009 were 72 essays, representing (59%) of the total essays used in the assessment project.

- The rubric increased the pass rate in the assessment project to 75%, as predicted, thus raising the question of the inaccuracy of given scores during Fall 2009. One plausible interpretation for the discrepancy is that more than 25% of the readers during Fall 2009 were inexperienced with no practical instrument to enlighten and support their decisions (see Appendix 3).

- It is worth mentioning that 72 essays (60% of the total essays passed in the assessment project) received identical scores of (4 or 5) by two readers compared to only 37 essays (39% of the total essays passed during the reading in Fall 2009) that received similar scores (the margin of error is 5% [ $p > .05$ ]). On the other hand, 35 essays (85% of total essays failed in the assessment project) received identical scores of (2 or 3) by two readers compared to 55 essays (83% of the essays failed during Fall 2009) that received similar scores (the margin of error is less than 1% [ $p > .01$ ]). The previous results validate the reliability of the new rubric as an instrument in assessing the EBS Mastery Test essays. However, whether the rubric will sustain this reliability is a matter left to be seen when more data is obtained during one or two coming semesters.

As a result of extensive involvement throughout this assessment process, faculty in the department are now committed to using this rubric when scoring the EBS Mastery Test.


(The Summary should appear here. Use attachments only to provide information to support the summary.)

### SEMESTER 4: Reporting and Revising

Use of results:

- The created rubric is simple, consistent and valid for its intended purpose and together with the range finders can be used as a reliable tool in assessing the learning objective of the department.

- The rubric can be an effective mechanism in helping students to become aware of what is required to successfully exit the EBS program and provide them with guidelines to identify their strengths and weaknesses, measure their own performance and monitor their own progress.

Dean's Comments: 

VP's Comments: