

Bergen Community College

ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Assessment Period: Fall 2014 – Spring 2016

Department/Program: English Basic Skills

Department Chair: Michael Berkowitz

Department Assessment Liaison: Leigh Jonaitis

Date Submitted: April 28, 2015 (updated from November 2014 submission)

❖ **Program Description or mission/goal statement of the Department/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 to provide them with a challenging educational experience that enhances the critical thinking skills necessary for life-long learning.

Based upon the results of the English portion of the basic skills assessment and placement test, a student may be placed in one of four entry level English courses:

- Developmental Skills I and Developmental Skills II (EBS 011 / 012)
- English Skills (EBS 021)
- Directed Studies in Writing II and Composition I (EBS 033 and WRT 101)
- Directed Studies in Writing and Composition I (EBS 041 and WRT 101)
- Composition I alone (WRT 101)

Program Learning Goals/Outcomes:

- Goal 1: Use critical reading and thinking skills to analyze college texts.
- Goal 2: Use a variety of computer programs to support and develop language skills.
- Goal 3: Find and use outside sources in written assignments.
- Goal 4: Write multi-paragraph essays with unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills.
- Goal 5: Apply writing process to writing assignments.
- Goal 6: Demonstrate academic survival skills.

SEMESTER 1: CREATING PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT PLAN

❖ **Program Learning Goal(s) or Outcome(s) to be assessed (from the above section):**

- Goal 3: Find and use outside sources in written assignments.

Means of Assessment:

For the past decade, the EBS Department has been administering two Mastery Tests per semester: the traditional essay test graded by the EBS committee and a summary test graded by the individual instructor. After departmental discussions that took place in Spring 2011, the department began to use the “Pilot” Mastery Test, which requires students to incorporate outside readings into their essays. Since that time, the pilot has been given in selected EBS 012 and 021 sections for several semesters. The test has gone through several stages of development and administration, and the current process involves the selection by the Pilot Committee of two recently-published articles or essays, creation of prompts for each, administration of the test by members of the Committee in their classes, and grading of the tests by the EBS Department.

In Fall 2014, the EBS Department voted to use this Pilot Mastery Test in all sections of EBS 011, 012, and 021. Starting in Spring 2015, the EBS Department will move to this integrated reading and writing test, so the purpose of this project is to assess its efficacy as a measure of one of our Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Anecdotally, we have observed that students feel more confident before, during, and after the exam as they are given plenty of supporting documents, and time to read, summarize, annotate, and respond to these texts prior to the exam. This is much more in line with our Departmental SLOs than the traditional exam.

Since this new version of the Mastery Test is a requirement for all pre-college levels of EBS, this means that we will be assessing exit criteria for all students in EBS 012 and EBS 021, and those students in EBS 011 who—based on instructor recommendation—qualify for entrance into WRT 101 or WRT 101 paired with the EBS 033 support course (“targeted acceleration”). We will use the newly-developed “Pilot” Mastery Test rubric to assess student performance.

Feedback from Dean:

SEMESTER 2: DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT TOOL (s) and TIMELINE

3A. Describe or attach assessment tool (s), including sources of data, timeline for data collection and how data will be analyzed.

We will assess students’ ability to integrate references to an article into an essay in a way that seems organic, logical and balanced. Two readers will evaluate each essay and use a rubric to score it. This will increase validity and reliability of results. A third reader will assess the essay if needed.

We will then gather the tests at the conclusion of the semester and assess pass rates, then compare them to past pass rates of the traditional Mastery Test. For the purposes of this project, higher

added scores from the two readers (12, 11, 10, 9, 8) will indicate mastery, mid-range numbers (7, 6) will reflect average proficiency, and lower scores (5, 4, 3, 2) show ineffective abilities.

Assessment of the overall effectiveness of the test will be done through gathering the exams at the end of the term and calculating the numbers of each exam falling under a particular score, adding them up, and calculating the percentage of each score (scores range from 2-12). We will then compare this data to Spring 2014 totals (Pilot and traditional), to analyze the overall effectiveness of this exam. Since spring semesters have traditionally been comprised of a smaller EBS population than fall semesters, we will compare Spring 2015 scores to Spring 2014 scores, and Fall 2015 scores to Fall 2014 scores¹.

Attached is the grading rubric used for the new version of the Mastery Test.

Timeline for Implementation	
April-May 2015	Administer new version of Mastery Test to all EBS 011, 012, and 021 sections.
April-May 2015	Departmental scoring of new version of Mastery Test to all EBS 011, 012, and 021 sections.
June-July 2015	Gather initial data into spreadsheet to track Mastery Test scores.
September 2015	Present Spring 2014/Spring 2015 comparison results at EBS Departmental meeting.
October 2015	Work with a small committee to make any needed adjustments to the data collection process.
November 2015	Administer new version of Mastery Test to all EBS 011, 012, and 021 sections.
December 2015	Departmental scoring of new version of Mastery Test to all EBS 011, 012, and 021 sections.
January 2016	Gather initial data into spreadsheet to track Mastery Test scores.
February 2016	Prepare first draft of final report to present to the EBS Department for review.
April 2016	Submit final assessment report to CIE.

3B. Desired results faculty would like to see.

Faculty would like to see that the Pilot Mastery Test results in a higher rate of “mastery-level” scores than the previous Mastery Test. As an example, in Spring 2014, 32% of students in EBS 012 who took the previous Mastery Test scored an 8 or higher. Therefore, we would like to see a score above that for both Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 semesters, when all students will take the new version of the Mastery Test.

- **Feedback from CIE:**

¹ This set of data (Fall 2014) was later changed to Fall 2013 to be used as baseline data because by Fall 2014, the pilot had been more fully integrated.

SEMESTER 3: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

4. Summary of Results (attach aggregated data table, survey tool, etc., to support the summary)

The following table presents the changes in scores between the former Mastery Test (indicated in gray) and the current Mastery Test (formerly known as the “pilot”). After consideration, Fall 2013 scores were used as a point of comparison, because many more “pilot” section had already been integrated into the testing process by Fall 2014, including EBS 011 sections.

	Spring 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2013*	Fall 2015
Score	Number of Tests	Number of Tests	Number of Tests	Number of Tests
4	9	15	8	21
5	4	11	5	14
6	129	118	214	153
7	141	128	227	126
8	125	145	265	111
9	58	34	73	19
10	26	25	19	9
11	3	2	11	1
12	0	2	4	0
Score of 8+	212	208	372	140
Score of 7+	353	336	599	266
Score of 6+	482	454	813	419
TOTAL	495	480	826	454

Percentages				
Score of 6+	97.40%	94.60%	98.40%	92.30%
Score of 7+	71.3	70%	72.50%	58.60%
Score of 8+	42.8	43.30%	45%	30.80%

While the difference in passing scores (6 and above) between the spring semesters was minimal (a difference of 2.8 percentage points), the difference between fall semesters was more significant: 6.1 percentage points. The difference between the higher scores (7 and above) in spring semesters was not statistically significant, but in fall, both levels (7 and above, 8 and above) saw a drop of about 14 percentage points (13.9 and 14.2, respectively). Frankly, these were not the anticipated, nor desired, results.

In consulting with EBS faculty, the following explanations for the problems with Fall 2015--but not Spring 2015--might be at play:

- There were more EBS 011 (lower-level) students represented in this group of tests, for as the EBS Accelerated Learning Program continued to grow, more faculty were forwarding EBS 011 students for EBS 033 consideration. EBS 011 students typically begin their academic careers on a lower level than those placed in EBS 021 using the Accuplacer placement tests. In addition, the EBS department typically offers about twice as many EBS 011 sections in the fall semesters than in the spring semesters due to trends in enrollment. (More students begin at the college in the fall, making the first semester EBS 011 course more popular then.)
- Approximately one month before the Fall 2015 semester, 8 EBS lecturer positions were removed, causing a scramble and general upheaval in the faculty teaching in the EBS department. Feedback from the Testing Coordinator indicates that new faculty hired at the last minute had a difficult time understanding requirements for the new version of the Mastery Test and many did not begin to prepare students for the skills they would need for the test--specifically, using support from a text to develop and prove a thesis--until closer to the end of the semester.
- These same adjunct faculty, hired shortly before the start of the fall semester, likely did not have as much experience with procedures, nor with an integrated reading and writing curriculum and the student learning outcomes that the revised Mastery Test is meant to address.

5. Recommendations for Improvement:

Preliminary data from 2014 had indicated that those students who took what was previously called the "Pilot" exam (in the same semester as those who had taken the former Mastery Test) were more likely to earn higher scores when administered in the same semester. These preliminary, incredibly positive results were not sustained when the Pilot exam was introduced to all students in the fall semesters.

However, since the revised Mastery Test more appropriately assesses the SLOs of the department, it will still remain in place. The question becomes how to best instruct faculty to teach the skills need for success in EBS courses and the revised Mastery Test, as both are intended to foster student success beyond the EBS program.

As such, the following recommendations might be appropriate for ensuring that students learn the skills need to succeed on the revised Mastery Test and in subsequent courses. We recommend:

- Developing more opportunities for an EBS-specific faculty development program.
 - Considering different ways to inform and remind faculty, especially new faculty, about testing procedures.
 - Encouraging relationships between EBS and the Composition/Literature department to develop and maintain a pool of adjuncts so there is less turnover from year to year.
 - Taking into account the Mastery Test's focus on the integration on reading and writing, making sure that faculty have training in reading instruction as well as writing instruction.
 - Requesting new tenure-track faculty lines to replace persons who have retired or left the department.
- **Feedback from Dean:**

SEMESTER 4: CLOSING THE LOOP AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

6. Use of Results:

EBS faculty were presented with the preliminary results of this data in Spring 2016. In April, faculty participated in an all-day "EBS Summit," during which discussion about the future of the program took place. As a result, we plan to work on the following:

- Develop a more comprehensive plan for faculty development for those teaching EBS courses, especially those teaching EBS 011 and those teaching for the first time.
- Develop a more robust online resource to support such faculty development, including more of a focus on reading and on Mastery Test materials.
- Ensure that all EBS adjunct faculty are observed once a year, and that all new adjunct faculty are observed in their first semester of teaching.

Future assessment projects could take this project one step further and examine the differences between full-time and part-time Mastery Test scores and grades. Another option for future research might be to focus specifically on reading strategies of students. Since the revised version of the Mastery Test sought to better assess reading in addition to writing, we might consider examining the annotations and summaries that students bring to the Mastery Test writing sessions. (These activities are conducted outside of class, but students do not receive assistance with them.) Such work could

enable us to better understand the various moving parts of the revised Mastery Test and identify the skills that are most difficult for students.

Though the results were not exactly as we had anticipated, it is important to remember that the overall passing rates for both semesters of 2015 were consistent with previous years. Therefore, even though the combined reading/writing Mastery Test is now more rigorous than it was previously, it does not appear to be hindering student progress.

- **Feedback from CIE:**