

# **Written Communication Assessment**

**Palomar College**

**Learning Outcomes Council**

## **GE/ILO Assessment Process**

In April 2010, Palomar College identified a set of general education/institutional learning outcomes (GE/ILOs), which represent the overall set of abilities and qualities a student graduating from Palomar should possess. These were adopted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities' LEAP framework, and modified by the faculty of the college to reflect Palomar's particular set of values. The college's Learning Outcomes Council, hereinafter referred to as LOC, directs GE/ILO assessment planning and implementation.

In fall of 2014, the college assessed one subset of the intellectual and practical skills GE/ILO: Written Communication. A total of 38 randomly selected courses participated in the assessment. During a 2-hour training session, 39 participating course instructors were introduced to the assessment process and the draft rubric. Also during this training session, the assessors had the opportunity to further norm and refine the rubric. The assessors applied the final rubric to a designated student work (e.g. an exam, assignment, or paper) that would demonstrate students' ability to meet the GE/ILO being assessed. After scoring the student work, the assessors submitted the results to the college's Institutional Research and Planning Office. In order to get feedback about the assessment method and process, the assessors completed an online survey upon completing the assessment. Upon completion of the project requirements, the assessors received a \$250 stipend. During the spring 2015 semester, a special workgroup met to review the assessment results and to recommend action to LOC.

### **Shared Rubric:**

An LOC subcommittee and members of the English Department developed a holistic rubric for this assessment. A holistic rubric does not list separate levels of performance for each criterion. Instead, a holistic rubric assigns a level of performance by assessing performance across multiple criteria as a whole. The rubric ratings were as follows:

- 5 = Superior/Excellent
- 4 = Strong / More than Competent
- 3 = Competent
- 2 = Weak/Inadequate
- 1 = Incompetent

In addition, the assessors were asked for areas that were notably "strong" and notably "weak" (see rubric at the end of this document).

## **Results Summary**

### **Overall results**

- 81.2% of the students assessed were Competent / More than Competent

### **Results varied by subgroup**

- Female students received more “Superior” ratings
- Students aged 30+ students received more “Superior” ratings
- White, Non Hispanic and multi-ethnic tended to receive higher ratings
- Students with more units had slightly higher ratings.
- Strengths - context and purpose, critical thinking, overall structure
- Weaknesses- grammar and punctuation

### **Feedback from Assessors**

- Most assessors spent between 2-4 hours on this assessment
- They said the group norming helped them score their student work.
- Some had problems with the rubric – spread over 4 pages, sentence structure & grammar were difficult to separate out, needed a category for development of student ideas

### **Workgroup Recommendations – Process**

- Need to assess Written Communication again soon
- Consider how we assess writing – in-class writing versus take-home writing
- Consider using similar assignments – parameters
- Control timing of when the assessment is done during the semester
- Evaluate rubric again

### **Workgroup Recommendations - Action**

- Encourage writing assignment and assessment in all classes.
- Encourage revisions and help faculty with easy ways to implement.
- Discuss strategies to let faculty and students know about the current writing resources available on campus (writing center, Dashboard, TLC)
- Workshops on specific areas – weaknesses
- Offer some examples of effective writing assignments
- Consider creating a video of faculty teaching writing
- Faculty forum / focus group – discussing areas of concern and how to help students
- Faculty focus group – asking what help they need with the assessment of writing.
- Offer PD Workshops for faculty -- how to improve writing in your classroom & Using rubrics

## TABLES

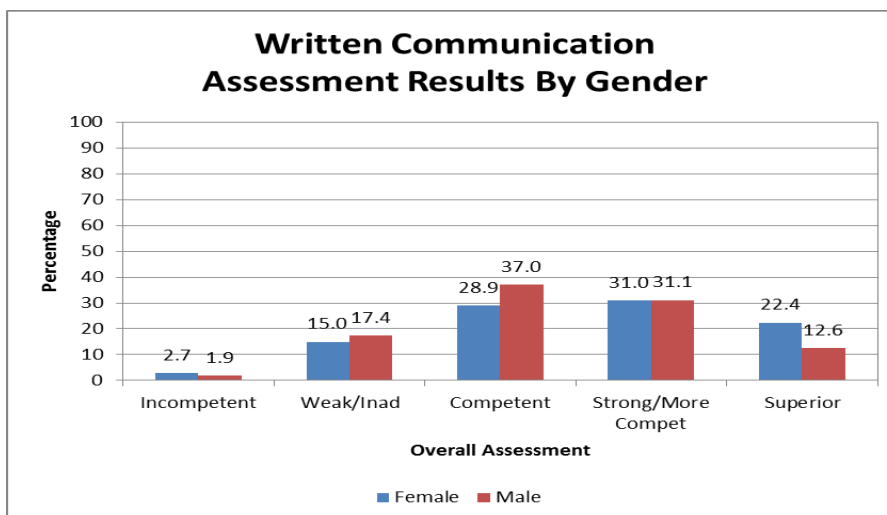
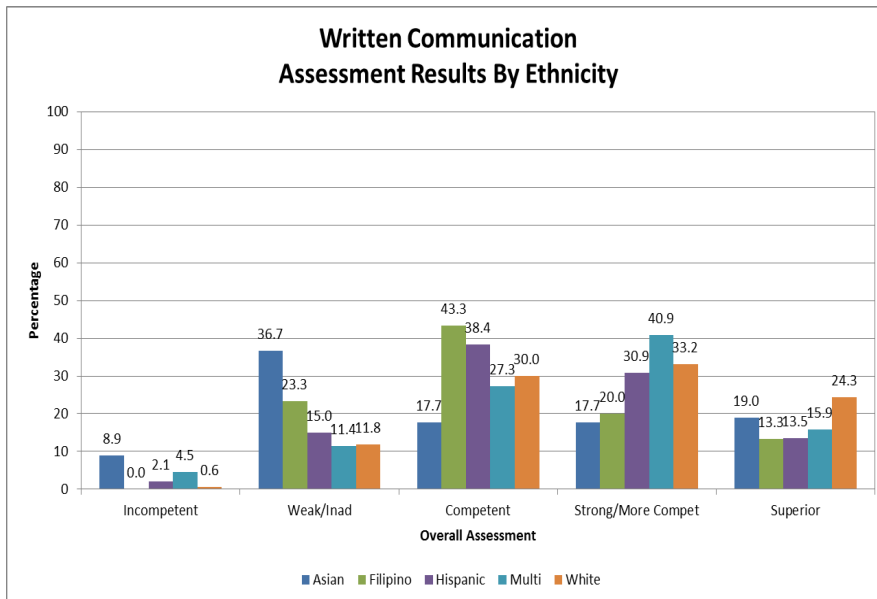
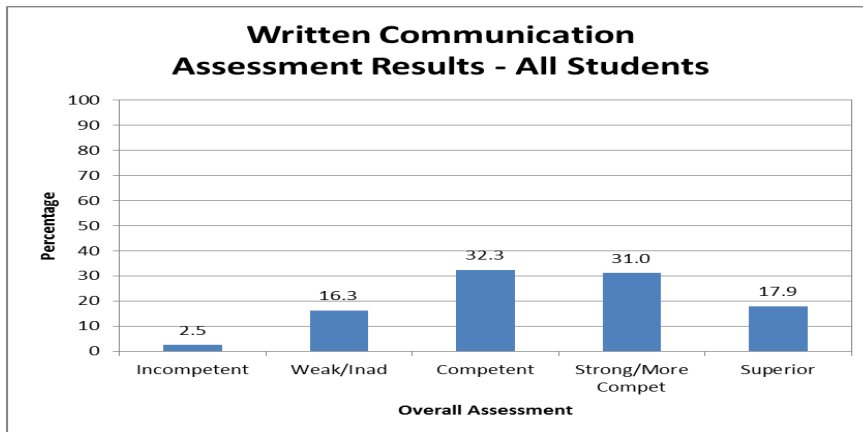
### Participating Students Characteristics

Written Communication Student Characteristics		
Characteristic	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	475	55.7
Male	373	43.7
Unkown	5	0.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Age</b>		
< 18	34	4.0
18-19	313	36.7
20-22	233	27.3
23-29	172	20.2
30+	101	11.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Asian	79	9.3
Black	23	2.7
Filipino	30	3.5
Hipanic	333	39.0
Multi-ethnicity	44	5.2
Native American	5	0.6
Pac Isl	4	0.5
White, Non-Hispanic	313	36.7
Unknown	22	2.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>100.0</i>

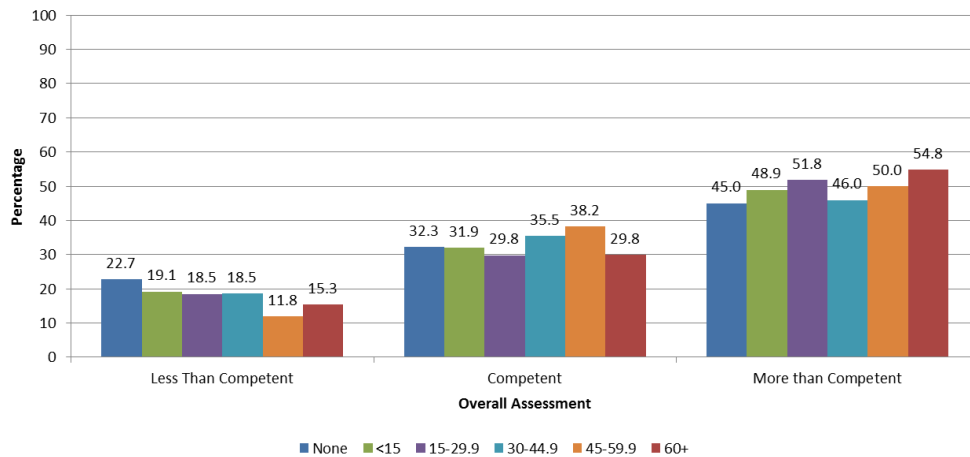
### Number of Units Completed

Written Communication Student Progress (Units Completed) at Palomar		
	N	%
<b>Units Completed</b>		
None	220	25.8
Less than 15	141	16.5
15-29.9	168	19.7
30-44.9	124	14.5
45-59.0	76	8.9
60 units or more	124	14.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>853</i>	<i>100.0</i>

## Overall Assessment Results



**Written Communication  
Assessment Results By Units Completed**



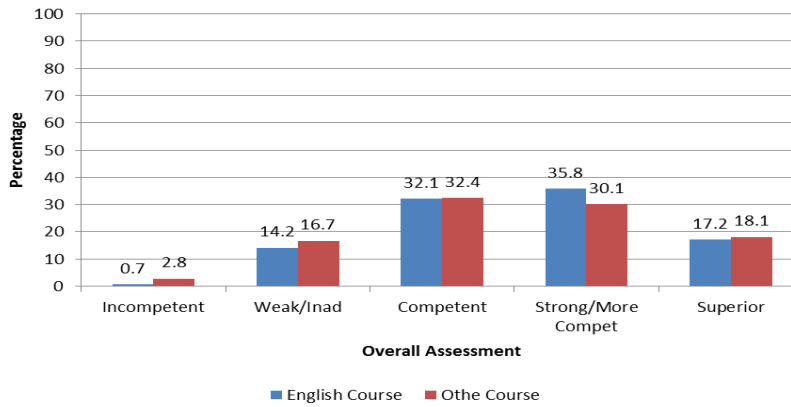
**Strengths - All Students**

	Strength
Context and Purpose	51.8
Critical Thinking	47.0
Overall Structure	49.2
Sentence Structure	31.7
Vocabulary	19.4
Grammar/Punctuation	19.2
Sources/Documentation	NA
None	13.1

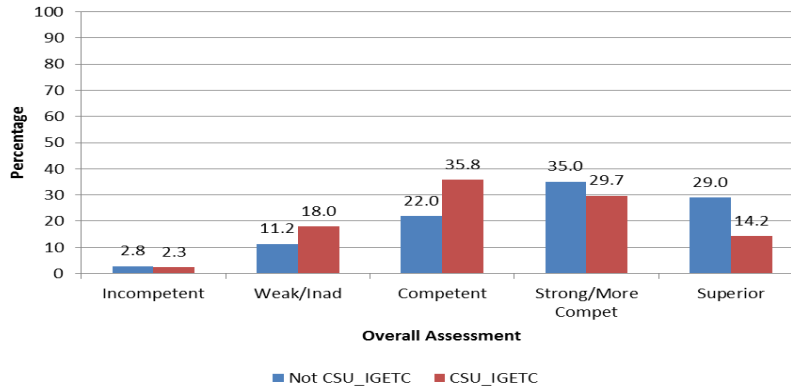
**Weaknesses - All Students**

	Weakness
Context and Purpose	12.5
Critical Thinking	15.7
Overall Structure	24.1
Sentence Structure	26.7
Vocabulary	27.4
Grammar/Punctuation	32.4
Sources/Documentation	NA
None	25.9

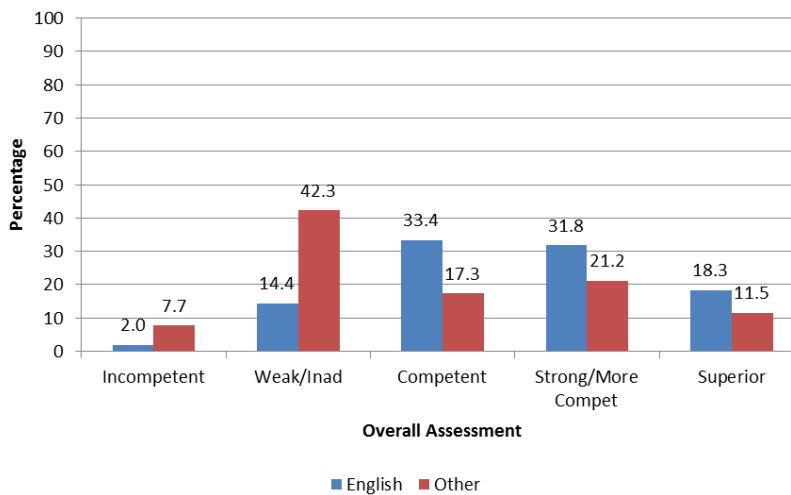
### Written Communication Overall Assessment By Course Type



### Written Communication Overall Assessment By CSU\_IGETC Course Cert



### Written Communication Overall Assessment By Language Spoken At Home



## **Written Communication Rubric**

Written Communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing.

The following categories describe typical characteristics of written communication at five levels of competence. Because no writing will fit uniformly into a single category, the grader must judge which category BEST DESCRIBES a particular written work.

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### **5—Superior/Excellent**

**Context and Purpose:** Establishes context, audience, and purpose that are appropriate to the assignment and focus all elements of the work.

**Critical Thinking:** Develops thoughtful, in-depth discussion through compelling examples, analysis, explanation/elaboration, and other support appropriate to the assignment and academic discipline.

**Overall Structure:** Presents well-crafted organization, cogent thesis/central idea of paper, topic sentence/central idea of paragraph, clear transitions, and/or specific structural elements required for the particular assignment.

**Sentence Structure:** Demonstrates sophisticated and varied sentences.

**Vocabulary:** Employs consistently precise and specific word-choice.

**Grammar and Punctuation:** Adheres to the conventions of Standard Written English, with very few (if any) minor errors.

**Sources and Documentation (if required):** Incorporates authoritative, credible, relevant sources documented appropriately to the discipline and assignment.

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### **4—Strong/More than Competent**

**Context and Purpose:** Establishes context, audience, and purpose that are appropriate to the assignment and focus most elements of the work.

**Critical Thinking:** Develops thoughtful discussion through examples, analysis, explanation/elaboration, and other support appropriate to the assignment and academic discipline.

**Overall Structure:** Presents coherent organization, pointed thesis/central idea and topic/introductory sentences, clear transitions, and/or structural elements required for the particular assignment.

**Sentence Structure:** Demonstrates effective, well-structured sentences.

**Vocabulary:** Employs usually precise and specific word-choice.



**Grammar and Punctuation:** Adheres to the conventions of Standard Written English, with occasional errors.

**Sources and Documentation (if required):** Incorporates credible, relevant sources documented appropriately to the discipline and assignment.

### **3—Competent**

**Context and Purpose:** Establishes context, audience, and purpose that are appropriate to the assignment.

**Critical Thinking:** Develops adequate discussion through examples, analysis, explanation/elaboration, and other support appropriate to the assignment and academic discipline.

**Overall Structure:** Presents discernible organization with pointed thesis/central idea and topic/introductory sentences, but may lack transitions, and/or only presents discernible structural elements required for the particular assignment.

**Sentence Structure:** Demonstrates adequate sentences.

**Vocabulary:** Employs more generalized word-choice.

**Grammar and Punctuation:** Adheres to the conventions of Standard Written English, with occasional and sometimes serious errors in grammar and/or punctuation.

**Sources and Documentation (if required):** Incorporates useful sources documented appropriately to the discipline and assignment.

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### **2—Weak/Inadequate**

**Context and Purpose:** Does not establish context, audience, and purpose that are sufficiently appropriate to the assignment.

**Critical Thinking:** Presents inadequate discussion lacking in examples, analysis, explanation/elaboration, and/or other support appropriate to the assignment and academic discipline.

**Overall Structure:** Lacks clear organization, pointed thesis/central idea and topic/introductory sentences, and/or transitions, and/or specific structural elements required for the particular assignment.

**Sentence Structure:** Demonstrates inadequate sentences often lacking variation.

**Vocabulary:** Employs imprecise and/or inappropriate word choice.

**Grammar and Punctuation:** Does not adhere consistently to the conventions of Standard Written English, containing frequent distracting errors in grammar and punctuation.

**Sources and Documentation (if required):** Lacks pertinent sources and appropriate and/or accurate documentation.

### **1—Incompetent**

**Context and Purpose:** Does not address the assignment.

**Critical Thinking:** Fails to present discussion.

**Overall Structure:** Lacks organization, pointed thesis/central idea and topic/introductory sentences, and/or transitions, and/or structural elements required for the particular assignment.

**Sentence Structure:** Contains confusing sentences.

**Vocabulary:** Employs incorrect word choice.

**Grammar and Punctuation:** Does not adhere to the conventions of Standard Written English, with consistent serious errors in grammar and punctuation.

**Sources and Documentation (if required):** Provides few if any sources, and lacks accurate documentation.

#### **1) Which of the following are notably strong for this student?**

- ☐ Context and Purpose
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Overall Structure
- ☐ Sentence Structure
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar and Punctuation
- ☐ Sources and Documentation (if required)
- ☐ None

#### **2) Which of the following are notably weak for this student?**

- ☐ Context and Purpose
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Overall Structure
- ☐ Sentence Structure
- ☐ Vocabulary
- ☐ Grammar and Punctuation
- ☐ Sources and Documentation (if required)
- ☐ None