

## Assessment results

Based on assessments that were conducted in FIQWS in the past two years, the following findings and recommendations have been vetted and approved for implementation by the General Education Implementation Committee. Please keep these in mind as you develop and teach your course. We expect that adopting these actions in the classroom will help to further improve this successful program.

### Assessment Findings

Assessment of Writing and Information Literacy Skills in Fall 10 FIQWS classes (summary):

#### Writing and Communication Skills

1. Thesis:  
An emerging thesis appears in nearly every essay, which is an improvement over last year's findings. Students still struggle with articulating the thesis clearly and creating a thesis statement that merits complex analysis. Thesis statements rarely articulate opposing viewpoints, because few students develop true, dual-sided, debatable topics.
2. Structure and Organization:  
Introductions and conclusions are in place and competent, though not always compelling. Every essay has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Organization of information throughout the body of the essay is weaker. Transitions are most often missing or ineffective.
3. Evidence and Development:  
All students utilize sources related to their topics. Students struggle, however, to assess their sources and recognize their biases or weakness. Few students give counter-arguments, suggesting that they have not familiarized themselves with the broader "landscape" within which their inquiry is situated.
4. Mechanics and Style:  
Most students are approaching competency in this category. While ESL issues account for some errors, papers show evidence of difficulty in areas of agreement, diction, and syntax. In addition to grammar concerns, students at times show difficulty in articulating complex ideas.

#### Information Literacy Skills

1. Demonstrates a clear understanding of information needs and is able to search efficiently:  
Students show a good variety of sources, some of them from scholarly journals. Still an over-reliance on Internet sources with no authors specified. Students struggle with interpreting these sources. Sources are rarely challenged, and often information is inserted without evaluation.
2. Effectively evaluates information sources:  
Students seem comfortable finding sources, and most use at least one scholarly source. The majority of sources, however, are Internet sources. The credibility of sources is left unchallenged.
3. Articulates credibility of sources:

## Appendix A

The students show very few mentions at all of sources' credibility, probably because few experts are used as primary sources. Students mention nothing more than the name of the author, and often the information is introduced without the use of any signal phrase.

4. Uses information ethically:

Students seem very conscious of plagiarism and the idea of citations, footnotes, and bibliographies. Where students struggle is in using the precise format of the given citation style. Lapses in citation or citation style may be attributed to students' lack of skill in documentation rather than ethical issues.

### Actions

To be implemented by instructors starting Fall 11 semester (includes recommendations from Fall 09 assessment):

- Introduce **student essays as examples**
- Focus on **thesis instruction** – thesis statement to be required at the end of introductory paragraph.
- Focus instruction on information **source validity** - Instructors need to discuss scholarly sources vs. other sources (and how to access them) and require a certain number of scholarly sources to be used for the final paper.
- Topic instructors should **provide students with clusters of materials** to be used as possible sources for the final papers.
- Composition instructors should focus on **assessing the value of sources** and expertise of the authors of these sources. While the topic instructor should take the lead in guiding students to quality sources, the composition instructor should focus his/her energy on helping students thoroughly analyze sources.
- Require that papers written before the final paper in FIQWS include a **research component**.
- Require that the final paper undergo **revisions**.
- Share the **writing skills rubric and the information literacy** rubric with students (to be included in the syllabus. (See appendix B; also available on the Gen Ed website)
- Students should receive a **checklist** along with the rubrics for easier use when working on research paper. (See appendix B; also available on the Gen Ed website)
- Students should be encouraged to **use all of the resources offered by the library** (print sources, reference desk)
- Supplemental support for ESL and grammar instruction should be utilized
  - The Writing Center** - TOEFL certified tutors
  - Grammar courseware** available for use at the College