

## General Education Assessment 2013-2014 Academic Year

### Introduction

The 2013-2014 academic year marked the beginning of the use of the revised general education framework and the general education assessment process was developed and piloted during that year. The Assessment Academy Team (AAT) decided to assess General Education Outcome (GEO) 2. Communicate effectively in writing using both Lakota and English. This outcome was selected for two reasons: 1) concerns about our students' writing abilities had been brought up repeatedly by various academic departments; 2) this outcome is more straightforward and it was therefore easier to come to a consensus regarding its meaning than what would have been the case with some of the other outcomes making GEO 2 a better candidate for piloting general education assessment.

In order to allow time to define the details of the assessment process, the AAT decided to focus on a few key courses for the selected GEO and to collect artifacts only from these and to allow both the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters for this work instead of assessing a different GEO in each semester as will be the case from now on. The selected key courses were Engl 103 Freshman English I, Engl 113 Freshman English II, Lak 103 Lakota Language I, and Lak 233 Lakota Language II.

### Artifact Collection Process

The AAT requested from the Humanities and Social Science and Lakota Studies Departments at the beginning of the Fall 2013 semester that artifacts were to be collected from all Engl 103, Engl 113, Lak 103, and Lak 233 sections. The Humanities and Social Science Department decided to collect the compare and contrast essays of Engl 103 Freshman English I students. A total of 13 sections of Engl 103 were taught in the Fall of 2013 and 65 artifacts coming from six sections were returned to the AAT. The artifact for Engl 113 Freshman English II was the research paper in APA format, and of the 10 offered sections, 33 artifacts from four sections were received.

Unfortunately, the AAT did not receive any artifacts from Lak 103 Lakota Language I, and only few from Lak 233 Lakota Language II. The Lakota Studies Department selected the post-test as artifact for this course.

Course	Artifact	# of Regular Sections	# of Sections Submitting Artifacts to AAT	# of Artifacts Received
Engl 103	Compare and Contrast Essay	13	6	65
Engl 113	Research Paper APA Format	10	4	33
Lak 103	-	17	No artifacts received	0
Lak 233	Post-Test	9	1 ??	??

## **Scoring Process**

Much consideration has been given to the scoring rubric for GEO 2. Whereas the creation of a new rubric was first considered, the AAT eventually decided to use the Written Communication Value Rubric developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). This will allow us to compare our data to other schools and provides us with a rubric that has been tested by a variety of institutions. In order to account for OLC's particular mission, Rebuilding the Lakota Nation Through Education, the AAC&U rubric was adapted in collaboration with the Lakota Studies Department to fit our needs:

- 1) Prior to the actual writing rubric, the overall general education goal, Students will exemplify Wolakolkiciyapi, is listed as element. This will be included on the scoring rubrics for the other GEOs as well.
- 2) GEO 2 includes writing in English and Lakota but as the focus of the Lakota Language courses is different from English, the elements used to score the latter are mostly inapplicable to the former. Therefore five Lakota-specific elements were added: Comprehensibility, Level of Discourse, Vocabulary, Language Control, and Mechanics.

The scoring of the artifacts took place on August 10, 2014 with eight faculty and staff members representing five academic departments (Humanities and Social Science, Math, Science and Technology, Social Work, Nursing, and Vocational Education) as well as the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Due to the high number of artifacts received, this group decided to select 30 papers from each of the English courses using systematic sampling (selection of every fifth paper until sample size of 30 is reached). Each English artifact was to be scored by two individuals. The Lakota language artifacts were reviewed by three individuals.

## **Data Aggregation Process**

Engl 103 and 113 artifacts: The scores from both reviewers for each of the rubric elements were recorded. For each element, the official score was determined by the arithmetic mean of the score given by each reviewer. In addition, an overall score was calculated for each paper by adding up all mean scores with the exception of the Wolakolkiciyapi and Lakota Language elements. The Wolakolkiciyapi element was not included because most scorers did not give feedback on that element. The Lakota Language elements were excluded as they were not applicable to most of the papers.

Lak 233 artifacts: The three reviewers of the Lakota Language papers determined that due to disconnectedness between collected artifact and scoring rubric, the post-tests are not suitable to measure GEO 2 adequately.

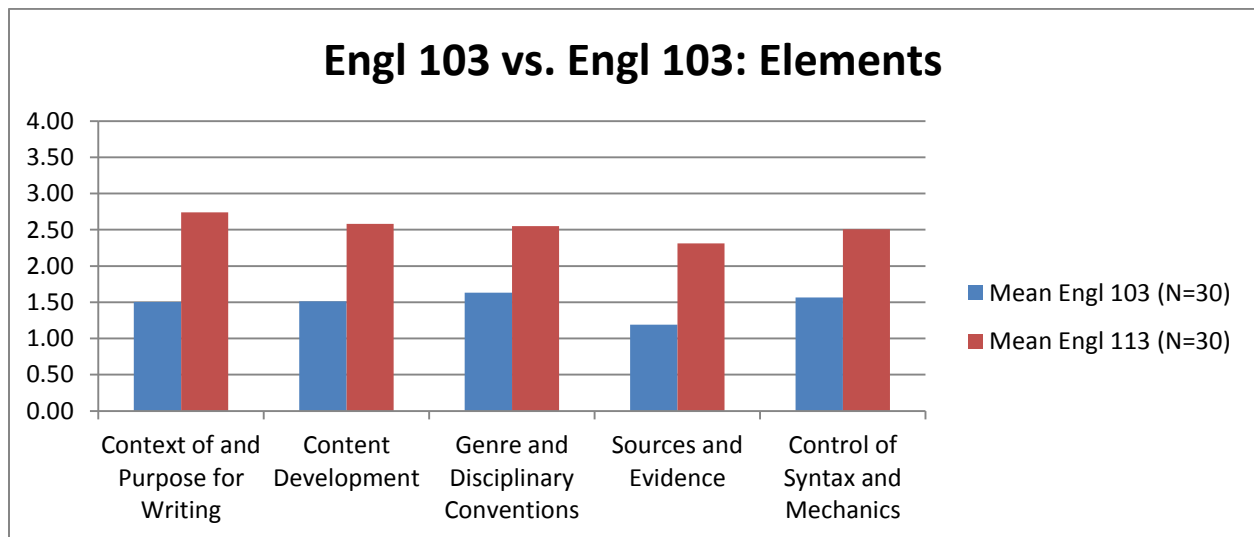
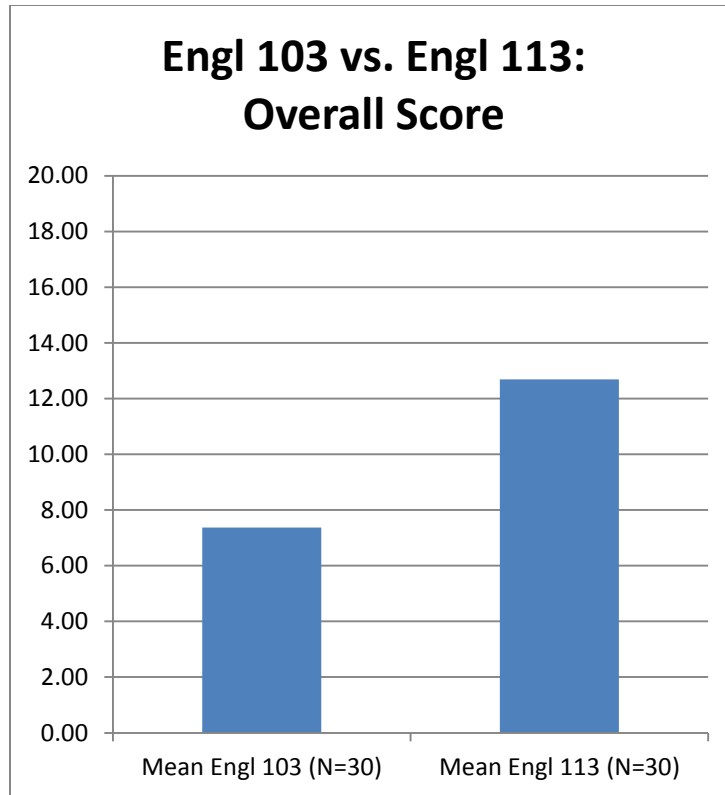
## Data Analysis Process

In order to allow for a comparison between Engl 103 and Engl 113, arithmetic means of official scores (=means of scores given by two reviewers) were calculated for each element as well as overall score separately for both courses. The maximum possible for each individual element was 4.0 and 20.0 for the overall score. Using AAC&U's terminology, the different levels can be described as follows:

	Benchmark Not Met	Benchmark Met	Milestone	Milestone	Capstone
Individual Elements	0-0.9	1.0-1.9	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.9	4.0
Overall Score	0-4.9	5.0-9.9	10.0-14.9	15.0-19.9	20.0

As the results in the table below show, on average, students scored in the benchmark met category in Engl 103 and in the first milestone category in Engl 113. The improvement between Engl 103 and Engl 113 was statistically significant for all elements ( $p < .001$ ). Comparing the elements for Engl 103, scores for Context of and Purpose of Writing, Content Development, Genre and Disciplinary Conventions, and Control of Syntax and Mechanics are very similar but the Sources and Evidence scores are lower. This element received lower scores in Engl 113 as well. In that course, Context of and Purpose for Writing received the highest scores. As mentioned above, Wolakolkiciyapi was not included in the overall score. Only few reviewers included a score for this element as it was not applicable to many of the papers.

	Overall Score	Wolakolkiciyapi	Context of and Purpose for Writing	Content Development	Genre and Disciplinary Conventions	Sources and Evidence	Control of Syntax and Mechanics
Mean Engl 103 (N=30)	7.37	1.00	1.51	1.51	1.63	1.19	1.57
Mean Engl 113 (N=30)	12.68	1.55	2.74	2.58	2.55	2.31	2.50



#### Suggestions for Improvement of the Assessment Process

The purpose of piloting the general education assessment process was not only to allow data-driven decisions for curriculum development but also to strengthen the process itself by identifying

weaknesses. The following weaknesses were identified by the individuals participating in the scoring session in August 2014:

*Artifact selection:*

- It needs to be emphasized to the academic departments that an artifact used for measuring course outcomes may not be suitable for measuring general education outcomes. In order for the departments to be able to select an appropriate assignment, the scoring rubric needs to be completed and given to the departments before the beginning of the semester.

*Submission of artifacts:*

- The description of the assigned task needs to be submitted with the artifacts. Otherwise it is not possible to evaluate whether an assignment met the assigned task.
- It needs to be ensured that all copies are clearly legible. Some of the papers were difficult to decipher due to toner quality.
- Student names should be removed from the artifact to allow blind scoring. Also, the artifact copy submitted to the AAT should not include any marks from the instructor

*Writing rubric:*

- The description of the different levels (benchmark, milestones, capstone) are sometimes very similar, making it difficult to distinguish them. We should consider altering them slightly. It is possible that the training session on how to use the rubric will reduce this issue.
- It is unclear how plagiarism can be addressed with this rubric.
- Citation of sources could be included in three of the elements. It needs to be clearly specified where it should be included.
- The Wolakolkiciyapi section needs to be revised to make it more applicable to papers on a variety of topics.

*Scoring:*

- There was sometimes a big discrepancy between the scores given by different reviewers. There needs to be training on how to use the rubric prior to each scoring session, especially when the reviewers come from a variety of departments.
- The scoring needs to be organized more systematically. Some papers were reviewed by three instead of two reviewers whereas a few others were only read once. One person should not participate in the scoring but focus on keeping track of how many times each artifact has been scored and ensure that the artifact number is included on each scoring sheet.
- Reviewers need to be reminded to fill out the Wolakolkiciyapi section and to add the artifact number to the scoring sheet.
- The scoring needs to be conducted in a quiet environment.

## **Recommendations to the Academic Departments**

### *Humanities and Social Science Department (Engl 103 and Engl 113):*

- The comparison of scores for the elements indicates lower scores for Sources and Evidence in both courses. Greater emphasis should be given to the finding, integration, and citing of credible sources.
- Find ways to incorporate Wolakolkiciyapi more into the writing tasks, e.g. by encouraging students to write about topics of local relevance. Collaboration with the Lakota Studies Department on this matter is suggested.
- Encourage students to include Lakota terminology (with English explanations) in their papers.
- The artifacts selected for Engl 103 and 113 work well for measuring of GEO 2.

### *Lakota Studies Department (Lak 103 and Lak 233):*

- Select artifacts that allow measurement of the specific GEO to be assessed in that semester. It is possible to use different assignments for different GEOs or course-level assessment.
- Ensure that artifacts are collected from most sections of all courses that have been selected for general education assessment in that semester.
- Collaborate with the AAT on the improvement of the Lakota elements in the different rubrics.
- Collaborate with the other academic departments on how Wolakolkiciyapi can be incorporated in their course offerings to a larger degree.