

Middle Tennessee State University  
General Education Assessment Report 2011-12

**Submitted to the Tennessee Board of Regents  
November 15, 2012**

**Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes  
Academic Year 2011-2012  
Subject Area: Mathematics**

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

**MATH 1710—College Algebra and MATH 1710K—College Algebra**

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

**All 2,309 students taking the final examination in fall 2011 and spring 2012 were assessed.**

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

**The procedures used are the same used in the 2010 and 2011 reports. Each learning outcome is associated with a specific set of questions—40 questions for the first learning outcome and 16 questions for each of the other learning outcomes.**

**It was felt that the distinction between Learning Outcomes 2 (real-life problems) and 3 (meaningful connections) was too subtle to measure with a single examination. Thus the same set of 16 questions was used to assess these two learning outcomes.**

**A correct response rate of at least 85% was deemed to be superior; a correct response rate between 60% and 84% was deemed to be satisfactory; a correct response rate of less than 60% was deemed to be unsatisfactory.**

**Fall 2011 and spring 2012 results are combined in this report. The report in 2011 was based only on spring data. In this report, change is based on data from the 2010 report which included both fall and spring.**

<b>Mathematics Learning Outcome to be Assessed</b>	<b><u>Test Used</u></b>	<b><u>Test Item Numbers</u></b>
<b>Learning Outcome 1:</b> Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 1-40
<b>Learning Outcome 2:</b> Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,22,39
<b>Learning Outcome 3:</b> Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,16,18,22,39

<b>Learning Outcome 4:</b> Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,5,8,9,13,14,18,20,22,24,29,31,32,34 ,38
<b>Learning Outcome 5:</b> Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	Math 1710 Common Final	Questions 2,3,4,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,21,27,28,30,40

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for mathematics. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
Outcome to be Assessed	Number and Percent	Number and Percent	Number and Percent
<b>Learning Outcome 1:</b> Students are able to use mathematics to solve problems and determine if results are reasonable.	<b>17.8% (+5.2)* (411 of 2,309 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions</b>	<b>62.4% (+0.5%)* (1441 of 2,309 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions</b>	<b>19.8% (-5.7%)* (457 of 2,309 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 2:</b> Students are able to use mathematics to model real-world behaviors and apply mathematical concepts to the solution of real life problems.	<b>13.4% (+3.5%)* (309 of 2,309 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions</b>	<b>60.4% (+7.1%)* (1394 of 2,309 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions</b>	<b>26.2% (-10.6%)* (606 of 2,309 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 3:</b> Students are able to make meaningful connections between mathematics and other disciplines.	<b>13.4% (+3.5%)* (309 of 2,309 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions</b>	<b>60.4% (+7.1%)* (1394 of 2,309 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions</b>	<b>26.2% (-10.6%)* (606 of 2,309 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions</b>
<b>Learning Outcome 4:</b> Students are able to use technology for mathematical reasoning and problem solving	<b>14.8% (+5.2%)* (342 of 2,309 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions</b>	<b>58.6% (+3.9%)* (1354 of 2,309 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions</b>	<b>26.5% (-9.2%)* (613 of 2,309 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions</b>

<b>Learning Outcome 5:</b> Students are able to apply mathematical and/or basic statistical reasoning to analyze data and graphs.	<b>26.5% (+8.0%)*</b> <b>(613 of 2,309 students) were correct on at least 85% of the questions</b>	<b>55.2% (-1.8%)*</b> <b>(1274 of 2,309 students) were correct on between 60% and 84% of the questions</b>	<b>18.3% (-6.2%)*</b> <b>(422 of 2,309 students) were correct on fewer than 60% of the questions</b>
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\*Change in percentage from fall 2009/spring 2010 to fall 2011/spring 2012

- Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?

**Combined results from fall 2011/spring 2012 show significant improvement over the comparable numbers from fall 2009/spring 2010.**

**Learning Outcome 1.** During 2011-2012 the percentage of students in the superior range increased by 5.2 percentage points and the percentage of students in the satisfactory range increased by 0.5 percentage points. Corresponding to these increases, the percentage of students in the unsatisfactory range decreased by 5.7 percentage points. This is a statistically significant improvement.

**Learning Outcomes 2 and 3.** During 2011-2012 the percentage of students in the superior range increased by 3.5 percentage points and the percentage of students in the satisfactory range increased by 7.1 percentage points. Corresponding to these increases, the percentage of students in the unsatisfactory range decreased by 10.6 percentage points. This is a statistically significant improvement.

**Learning Outcome 4.** During 2011-2012 the percentage of students in the superior range increased by 5.2 percentage points and the percentage of students in the satisfactory range increased by 3.9 percentage points. Corresponding to these increases, the percentage of students in the unsatisfactory range decreased by 9.2 percentage points. This is a statistically significant improvement.

**Learning Outcome 5.** During 2011-2012 the percentage of students in the superior range increased by 8.0 percentage points. Although the percentage of students in the satisfactory range decreased by 1.8 percentage points, the combined percent either superior or satisfactory increased by 6.2 percentage points. The percentage of students in the unsatisfactory range decreased by 6.2 percentage points. This also is a statistically significant improvement.

**These results show improvement in all learning outcomes! Fall 2011 data showed an increase in the correct response rate on 37 of the 40 questions over fall 2010. Average math ACT of MATH 1710 students in fall 2011 was 0.4 points higher than fall 2009. Average math ACT of MATH 1710 students in spring 2012 was 0.2 points lower than spring 2010.**

- Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

- **The Department of Mathematical Sciences has appointed a Coordinator of General Education this fall. This person chairs the Department’s Service Course Committee. In less than one semester several steps have been taken—**
    - **In an effort to determine best practices, the Service Course Committee is working on a survey of faculty in each general education course.**
    - **Faculty will be encouraged to utilize the University’s Academic Alert System early in the semester in order to notify students who are in jeopardy.**
  - **In the Department of Mathematical Sciences, College Algebra is taught entirely by full-time temporary instructors, adjunct instructors, and GTAs. In fall 2011, 36 different instructors taught 69 sections of College Algebra; in spring of 2012, 28 different instructors taught 44 sections of College Algebra. The Department will continue to seek administrative support for additional tenure-track lines in sufficient number to provide better instruction for all service courses.**
  - **In order to identify actions and strategies to improve student achievement, these results will be considered by the Department of Mathematical Science’s Service Course Committee and Coordinator of the Mathematics Tutoring Lab, as well as by the Department of University Studies.**
7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment of 2010-11? If yes, please explain.
- **In order to insure greater uniformity in syllabi, grading, and learning expectations, all instructors are now required to have common information on syllabi and to use the same grading scale.**
  - **The Department of Mathematical Sciences and University Studies both provide free tutoring labs for students in College Algebra. These labs are open as many hours as tutoring staff are available.**
  - **Several tenured/tenure-track faculty have been given one-hour workload assignments to support the Department’s tutoring labs.**
  - **University Studies continues to offer a program called Academic Intervention in Mathematics (AIM) to promote success for those highly at-risk students who are repeating prescribed General Education mathematics courses. AIM targets students who have failed the course in which they are enrolled. These at-risk students are identified for each instructor at the beginning of the semester. The instructor meets with each student periodically to advise, to encourage, to teach study skills, and to individualize other interventions. Interventions may include assignments of time to be spent in the Math Lab, notebook checks, or written assignments. Simply meeting with students to show concern for them and to build relationships with them is a proven retention tool. Students are encouraged to meet with instructors during office hours. Instructors also use phone calls, emails, and Advisor Alerts to contact students who are not attending class. It is obvious that this type of intervention would be helpful to other students, so instructors intervene when any student is not progressing well. Any intervention that is designed for repeating students is also available to non-repeaters.**

- **Results of previous assessments have been shared with the Department of Mathematical Sciences Faculty, Service Course Committee, and also with University Studies.**

**Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes  
Academic Year 2011-2012  
Subject Area: Oral Communication**

**1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.**

The course Fundamentals of Communication, COMM 2200, was used in the assessment of Oral Communication. To evaluate student performance in constructing and delivering an oral presentation, Informative Speech Outlines and Persuasive Speech Oral Presentations were assessed.

**2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.**

The COMM 2200 procedure consisted of random stratified samples of representative populations of the COMM 2200 sections offered in Spring 2012. The total enrollment in COMM 2200 for Spring 2012 was 2160. Data were collected from 276 students (124 Presentation Outlines and 132 Oral Presentations).

From the randomly selected sections of COMM 2200, Informative Speech Presentation Outlines and Oral Persuasive Speech Presentations were randomly selected for evaluation. The outlines consisted of blind copies requested from the instructors. Selected student oral presentations were video-taped. No identifying elements were used for individual students or instructors. Outlines, demographics instructions, videotapes and sections were identified by assigned numbers for the study. Assigned number listings were secured in a locked drawer in the principal investigator's office.

All random selections were generated using Research Randomizer (Urbaniak and Plous, 2008) from the Social Psychology Network.

Four faculty members in Communication Studies participated in a Pre-Assessment Workshop and developed a speech rubric (for assessment of the Persuasive Speech Presentations) and an outline rubric (to evaluate the Informative Speech Outlines). Resources for development of each rubric were collected from a variety of sources, including the National Communication Association and recent workshops.

Training for faculty members included three hours per evaluator to assess persuasive speeches and three hours per evaluator to assess outlines. All evaluators utilized in 2012 received three hours of training. Evaluation of speeches and outlines required three evaluators (as stipulated by the National Communication Association and professionals in the field). For the 2012 assessment, two new faculty members were trained to be evaluators. This is in keeping with the original proposal to add several new evaluators each assessment cycle.

**3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant change from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.**

The number of participants was increased from the number used in the pilot study to insure a valid representative sample (10 percent of the total enrollment) as well as provide a baseline for future assessment.

For the pre-pilot and for the 2010 assessment, informative speech outlines from all students enrolled in 12 different sections of COMM 2200 were collected while 5 to 7 persuasive speeches were recorded in 40 different sections of COMM 2200.

To increase sampling representativeness, the number of randomly stratified sections from which outlines and speeches were collected was increased for Spring 2012 to 43 sections for the outline assessment and 43 sections for the speech assessment.

**4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for oral communication. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.**

**TABLES (2012)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Oral Communication</b> TBR Competencies to be Assessed <i>NOTE: Since we assess persuasive oral presentations AND informative speech outlines, more than one table may be included for each TBR Outcome.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Superior</b>  Number and Percent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Satisfactory</b>  Number and Percent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unsatisfactory</b>  Number and Percent</p>
<p><b>TBR Outcome I</b> <b>Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement.</b></p> <p><i>[Table A: Revised on our rubric for <u>the persuasive oral presentation</u> to: Students are able to communicate the thesis/specific purpose in a manner appropriate for a persuasive presentation, the audience &amp; occasion---students communicate within the opening few sentences of the speech a thesis/specific purpose that is clear, concise, is appropriate and one that the audience members should clearly understand.]</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">54; (40.9%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">67; (50.8%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">11; (8.3%)</p>
<p><i>[Table B: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: Student outlines contain a purpose statement that is appropriate for an informative speech, is clear and concise, and contains no deficiencies in expression].</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">29; (23.4%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">73; (58.9%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">22; (17.7%)</p>
<p><b>TBR Outcome II.</b> <b>Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.</b></p> <p><i>[Table C: Revised on our rubric for <u>the persuasive oral presentation</u> to: Students use persuasive appeals (ethos, logos pathos) appropriate to the purpose, topic, audience, &amp; occasion---the speaker displays an ability to appropriately and effectively utilize all three types of persuasive appeals in the presentation and the speech is clearly persuasive</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">13; (9.8%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">88; (66.7%)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">31; (23.5%)</p>



<i>throughout.]</i>			
<p><b>TBR Outcome III.</b>  <b>Organizational Patterns. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).</b></p> <p><i>[Table D: Revised on our rubric for the <u>persuasive oral presentation</u> to: Students use an organizational pattern appropriate to the persuasive presentation--students present an introduction that clearly engages the audience in an appropriate and creative manner; the body of the speech reflects clarity in organization, and the conclusion reflects clearly and accurately the content of the speech and leaves the audience with a compelling message or call to action.]</i></p>	20; (15.2%)	94; (71.2%)	18; (13.6%)
<p><i>[Table E: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: Student outlines contain 2 to 5 main points; each point is clear and concise and consistently follows an organizational pattern (topical, chronological, etc.) that is appropriate for the topic and audience; all main points are fully developed.]</i></p>	14; (11.3%)	90; (72.6%)	20; (16.1%)
<p><b>TBR Outcome IV.</b>  <b>Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.</b></p> <p><i>[Table F: Revised on our rubric for the <u>oral persuasive speech</u> to: The speaker uses language that is reasonably clear, vivid and appropriate and is free of inappropriate jargon, slang, and is nonsexist, nonracist, etc.]</i></p>	57; (43.2%)	74; (56%)	1; (0.8%)
<p><i>[Table G: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: Student outlines contain clear language that is concise and appropriate to the audience, the topic and the occasion; may contain elements of style (the use of metaphors, parallelisms, etc.), and is void of language that is sexist, racist, etc.]</i></p>	1; (0.8%)	115; (92.7%)	8; (6.5%)
<p><i>[Table H: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: Student outlines contain no major errors in spelling, syntax and/or grammar.]</i></p>	14; (11.4%)	102; (82.9%)	7; (5.7%)

<p><b>TBR Outcome V.</b></p> <p><b>Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources.</b></p> <p><i>[Table i: Revised on our rubric for the <u>informative speech outline</u> to: A bibliography or works cited page is present and contains a minimum of 6 sources; sources are cited using an accepted citation style with no major errors or omissions.]</i></p>	50; (40.3%)	29; (23.4%)	45; (36.3%)
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**5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?**

With regard to the five TBR Learning Outcomes, performance was strong and showed improvement on **Outcome I**. (Tables A, B: Clear Articulation of a Purpose Statement) with over 92% of students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher on the speech as compared to 87% in 2011. Additionally, the percentage of unsatisfactory scores decreased from 13% in 2011 to 8% in 2012. Performance on the outlines remained strong, although little improvement was indicated, with 82% scoring at the satisfactory level or higher in 2012 as compared to 88% in 2011. Unsatisfactory scores also rose slightly for the outlines from 12% in 2011 to 18% in 2012.

For **Outcome II** (Table C: the Ordering of Main Points in a reasonable and convincing manner) performance also remained satisfactory with 77% of students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher. However, only 10% of students scored at the Superior level in 2012 as compared to 47% in 2011. There was also a slight increase in the number of unsatisfactory scores, from 11% in 2011 to 24% in 2012.

**For Outcome III** (Tables D and E: use of appropriate rhetorical patterns) 86% of students scored at the satisfactory level or higher on the speech and 84% scored at the satisfactory level or higher on outlines. There was also a slight increase in the number of unsatisfactory scores on the outlines, from 6% in 2011 to 16% in 2012.

Performance was also strong for **Outcome IV** (Tables F, G, H: diction, syntax, usage, grammar, mechanics) with more than 98% of students scoring at the satisfactory level or higher on the speech assessments. A higher percentage of students also received a superior rating on speeches in 2012 (43%) as compared to 15% in 2011. Performance on outlines also remained strong with 94% of students scoring satisfactory or higher although unsatisfactory scores also increased from 2% in 2011 to 6% in 2012.

Performance on **Outcome V** showed steady improvement. (Table i: the gathering and use of multiple sources). The number of students receiving a satisfactory or higher score rose from 60% in 2011 to 64% in 2012. The number of students who received an unsatisfactory score decreased from 40% in 2011 to 36% in 2012.

**6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.**

One of the continuing challenges with this assessment is insuring that evaluators are adequately trained. For the 2013 evaluation, all six evaluators will receive 3 hours of training in order to improve and achieve greater rater reliability.

A fall workshop and a spring workshop will continue to be held for all COMM 2200 instructors. A portion of each workshop will be dedicated to reviewing the assessment outcomes for 2012 and discussions on ways to improve all the outcomes. Particular emphasis will be placed on improving outcomes II and III.

This fall semester we adopted the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Art of Public Speaking*, which includes a web-based supplemental platform (Connect 2.0). This text was selected, in part, because of its focus on outlines, and the availability of an outlining program on the Connect website. In order to improve the consistency and quality of outlines crafted by our COMM 2200 students, instructors will be trained to use the outlining program and will be encouraged to require their students to use this program. Additionally, several pages were added to the custom edition of the text that specifically address outcomes I, III, IV and V. Before the end of the spring semester, a review of additional supplemental materials will be conducted to determine if other materials should be added to the custom version of the text.

We will continue to rely on the MTSU library staff and the special subject guide they have constructed to specifically assist COMM 2200 students conducting research on contemporary topics for the informative speech and controversial topics for the persuasive speech assignment.

We are also in the process of determining the feasibility of establishing a speaking center on campus that will provide additional assistance to students as they prepare for their various speaking assignments.

We will continue to request travel funds for Full Time Temporary Faculty to attend workshops and conferences that focus on improving instruction in the classroom. The establishment of a separate fund for continuing education for both Full Time Temporary faculty and adjuncts would be instrumental in our efforts to improve instruction.

We will continue to request that the coordinator position, currently held by a Full Time Temporary instructor, be converted to a tenure track position

We also will continue to request that the coordinator be given a two course load reduction in order to provide better monitoring of classroom instruction, work to establish and then direct the speaking center, improve workshop offerings, and mentor full-time temporary and adjunct faculty.

## **7. Have you implemented any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment of 2010-11?**

Since fall 2011, at least two workshops have been conducted for all COMM 2200 instructors each academic year. During these workshops, instructors have an opportunity to discuss and develop specific strategies for improving instruction on all the competencies, with special focus on those areas where students continue to fall below the satisfactory level of competence.

We continued to work closely with the library throughout the academic year, and as COMM 2200 students conducted research for speech assignments, they used the special subject guide developed by library staff. We also *strongly support* the inclusion of a direct link to the Walker Library on the MTSU Home page.

Currently COMM 2200 sections are being capped at a 25:1 student/faculty ratio. We would strongly recommend that class sizes remain at this 25:1 ratio as recommended by the National Communication Association.<sup>1</sup> Any increase in class size will only hamper efforts to maintain and improve the ability of our instructors to provide adequate instruction in COMM 2200 and assure that all students meet the minimum competency requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> According to *The National Communication Association's Standards for Undergraduate Communication Programs*, “. . . all performance courses (e.g. public speaking) should not have more than a 25:1 student /faculty ratio”. <<http://www.natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=1128&libID=1149>> .

**Assessment of General Education Learning Outcomes  
Academic Year 2011-12  
Subject Area: Writing**

1. Identify the course(s) used in the assessment. Include the prefix, number, and title of each course.

English 1020: Research and Argumentative Writing

2. Indicate the number of students who were assessed. Was sampling used? If yes, briefly describe the method of selecting student work and the percentage of students whose work was assessed.

All 1020 instructors were asked to submit one copy of a research essay (specifically the essay requiring the most research) submitted by each student. There were 2,328 students enrolled in English 1020 in spring 2011; a pool of 2,030 essays was collected. The essays of 298 students enrolled in English 1020 were not able to be used for the study due to two main issues: instructor non-compliance (e.g., not turning in any essays, turning in essays that were written on or graded, or turning in essays after the deadline) and student non-compliance (e.g., not turning in an essay to the instructor). This year, the compliance was higher than any previous year. A computer-generated randomizer ([www.random.org/lists](http://www.random.org/lists)) was used to decrease the original pool of 2,030 essays to a pool of 250 essays that were double blinded by clerical staff, using cover-up tape. The assessment organizer then double checked that the pool of 250 essays matched the data generated by the clerical staff. The computer-generated randomizer was used on these 250 essays, and the first 150 essays from the randomized pool were chosen as the final sample. Out of the original 2,030 essays, 100 essays—4.93% of the total essays—were chosen for the final sample and grading session. The next 50 essays picked by the randomizer were considered for the grade norming session, and five essays dealing with education (from five different instructors) were chosen as the grade-norming samples. Twelve faculty members at six different levels (GTA, adjunct, instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) graded the 100 essays with each essay being read twice and scored with the assessment rubric approved by the general education committee and TBR.

3. Do the procedures described in Items 1 and 2 represent any significant changes from previous assessments? If so, describe the changes and rationale.

In the pre-pilot (2007-08) and pilot (2008-09) studies, the assessment organizer discarded any essay that did not include a Works Cited. Based on a request from the Assessment Subcommittee of the General Education Committee, since 2010, the assessment organizer has not discarded any essays that were missing a Works Cited. Eight of the 100 essays (as compared to nine essays last year) used for the final sample did not include a Works Cited, even though instructors were asked to turn in a set of essays that resulted from assignments calling for the most student research in English 1020. Thus, 8% of the graded essays did not include a Works Cited, which would have an immediate detrimental effect on grading.

4. Per the evaluation rubric utilized at your institution, adapt the table below to record the results of the assessments of each learning outcome in the subject area discussed in the report. Below is an example of a table for writing. Revise the table to reflect the descriptors used at your institution. If you rephrased a TBR goal statement, type your institution's version below the corresponding TBR goal and within the same cell. If you addressed additional outcomes not included in the TBR list, create rows for them at the bottom of the table.

<b>Writing</b> Outcome to be Assessed	<b>Superior</b> (More than Adequate) Number and Percent	<b>Satisfactory</b> (Adequate) Number and Percent	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> (Less than Adequate) Number and Percent
Outcome A: Students are able to distill a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement. [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to distill a <b>primary argument</b> into a single, compelling statement.]	15/200= <b>7.5%</b>	101/200= <b>50.5%</b>	84/200= <b>42%</b>
*Outcome C: Students are able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose. [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to order major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on <b>primary argument</b> .]	17/200= <b>8.5%</b>	105/200= <b>52.5%</b>	78/200= <b>39%</b>
Outcome D: Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition).	11/200= <b>5.5%</b>	74/200= <b>37%</b>	115/200= <b>57.5%</b>
Outcome E: Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	13/200= <b>6.5%</b>	96/200= <b>48%</b>	91/200= <b>45.5%</b>
Outcome F: Students are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple sources. [revised on our rubric to: The student writer is able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple <b>secondary</b> sources.]	9/200= <b>4.5%</b>	94/200= <b>47%</b>	97/200= <b>48.5%</b>
Outcome B: [added criterion for our rubric: <b>The student writer gives a clear purpose and audience</b> .]	9/200= <b>4.5%</b>	100/200= <b>50%</b>	91/200= <b>45.5%</b>
Outcome G: [added criterion for our rubric: <b>The student writer has written a minimum of 1,000 words or four typed pages at 250 words per page (please estimate)</b> .]	0/200= <b>0%</b>	179/200= <b>89.5%</b>	21/200= <b>10.5%</b>

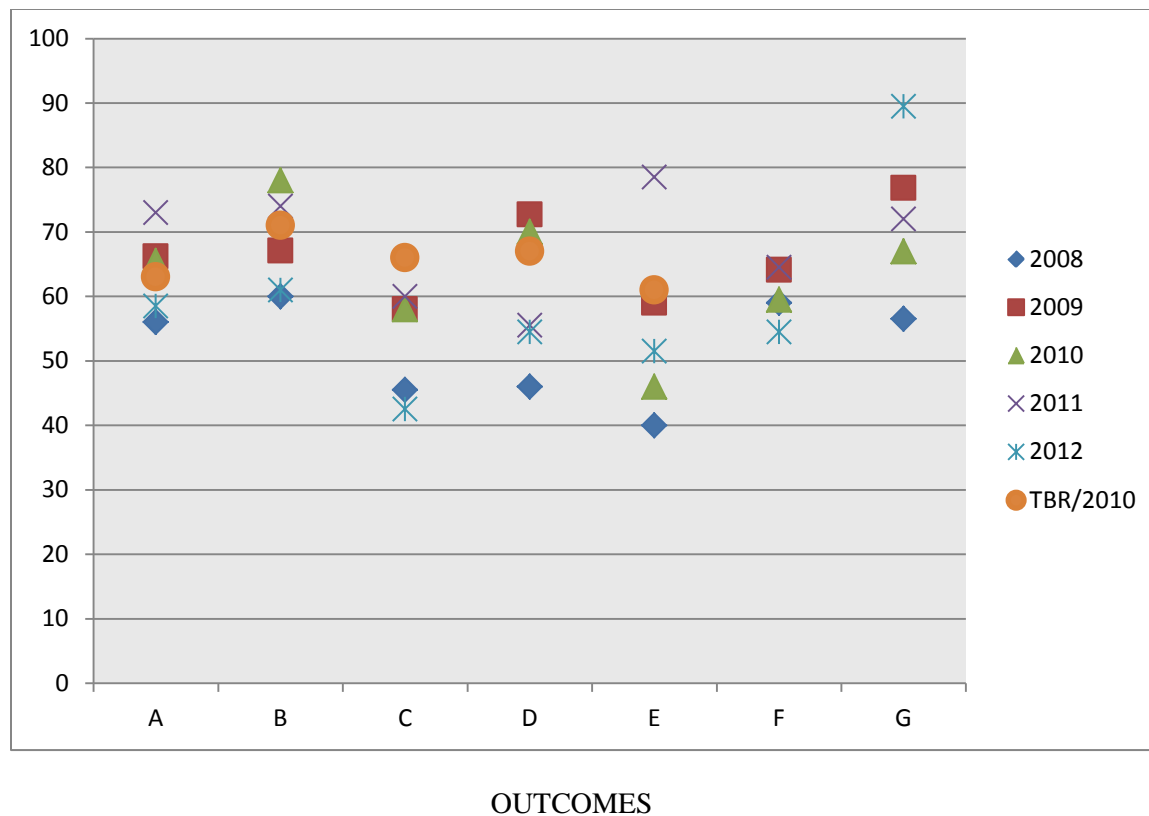
\*alpha order of Outcomes follows the MTSU Assessment Rubric

**FIGURE 1: Outcome Results (A to G)**

5. Summarize your impressions of the results reported in item 4. Based upon your interpretation of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of the learning outcomes?
  - Although not represented in the preceding table, inter-rater reliability for this assessment project ranges from 42% to 85%, dependent on the assessment objective. Each objective, except the one on rhetorical patterns (42%), is within an acceptable range of inter-rater reliability based on composition studies models. Since a focus on rhetorical patterns (or

modes) is not part of most up-to-date freshman texts, this is one category that, while falling below acceptable inter-rater reliability norms, is explainable.

- Based on the successful collection of assessment data for the last five years, we are now raising standards and revising the pedagogy our department uses to teach English 1020. An effective program assessment has both structure and fluidity, and our plan has both in that we can now use the same criteria and process each year, but we can also expect that as we make changes, our data and results will not be stagnant and will show both positive and negative fluctuations.
- Based on this year's **less than adequate** achievement by student writers in the pool, all criteria except for required page length need attention this year as compared to last year. However, since we want to take a long-range view of how to improve the teaching of writing at MTSU, we will continue to place **primary** focus on three of the outcomes of concern.
  - i. Students are able to develop their ideas using appropriate rhetorical patterns (e.g., narration, example, comparison/contrast, classification, cause/effect, definition). (57.5% of all students this year were less than adequate for this outcome compared to 40% last year)
  - ii. Student writers are able to manage and coordinate basic information gathered from multiple secondary sources. (48.5% of all students this year compared to 44.5% last year)
  - iii. Students are able to employ correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics. (45.5% of all students this year compared to 35.5% last year)
- Because a long-range view of how teaching of writing is improving at MTSU is necessary for us to track how our newly added strategies are working, we will now compare data across all years (five years of data is now available). A line graph of the comparison is included here. Other comparison methods will be shared with the department, and a general overview of how each year compares with others and with the average TBR scores will help us make internal decisions about further steps to take.



**FIGURE 2: Comparison of Outcomes A through G**

6. Do you plan to implement strategies to correct any deficiencies that emerged from the data obtained? If yes, please explain.

The English Department plans to

- disseminate results of the 2011-12 assessment study. We will
  - provide copies of the results to Dr. Tom Strawman, Department Chair; Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director; Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants; and Dr. Wes Houp, Director of the University Writing Center.
  - discuss results at the spring Lower Division curriculum meeting.
  - mention specifically at orientations, curriculum meetings, and general faculty meetings the need for instructor compliance in providing all 1020 essays for the assessment study each spring semester.
  - provide access to assessment results on the Lower Division website. In addition, the website gives access to sample syllabi and assignments.
  - email the faculty listserv with this year's results and highlight the three outcomes that should be focused on this year.
  
- actively encourage tenure-track and tenured faculty to include ENGL 1020 on their requests for either fall or spring semester teaching.



- focus on student management and coordination of sources. We will
  - have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants, continue to invite Dr. Jason Vance and others from James E. Walker Library to GTA/adjunct/FTT orientations to discuss available library assistance, including Research Coach, SearchPath, and Embed a Librarian options.
  - have the English Lower Division Committee continue the requirement for each English 1020 instructor to take their classes to the library for at least one class period for a librarian-led introduction to using the library effectively for research in 1020.
  
- investigate the role departmental grade inflation may play in less than adequate scores. We will
  - have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and the Lower Division Committee continue to review 1020 syllabi (for GTAs, adjuncts, FTTs and tenure-track faculty) for how instructors represented and fulfilled the Course Objectives for English 1020. The results will be given to each instructor with a request to revise any deficiencies by the next time the instructor teaches 1020. The committee will also confirm that each 1020 instructor uses appropriate texts that focus on the specific course objectives for 1020.
  - continue to provide instructors with end-of-semester grading data specific to their own courses and to the program.
  - have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and Dr. Julie Myatt, Coordinator of Teaching Assistants, organize grade norming sessions for GTAs/adjuncts/instructors in fall 2011 and spring 2012.
  
- continue the restructuring of the English 1020 course into a research and argumentative course that focuses on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), rather than on one that focuses on literary analysis, to stimulate more student interest and more student experience in research and argumentation. We will
  - have Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, lead the way in this restructuring. All 1020 instructors are required to choose one of the new WAC-based books and prepare new syllabi for this focus.
  
- review and revise the curriculum for ENGL 1010 to better prepare students not only for the demands of ENGL 1020 but for expository writing requirements in other courses. Our next step: a review of the ENGL 1010 curriculum and objectives has been conducted by the Lower Division Committee, which included researching the first-year writing programs of our peer institutions. Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, has introduced a pilot program this year that has some faculty and GTAs presenting ENGL 1010 as a Literacy for Life course with new textbooks and assignments that focus on writing (and reading) as literacy skills that will not only help students succeed in general education courses and courses in their major, but also be vital to their success post-graduation. This pilot will exist and continue to evolve for at least this academic year and perhaps into the next before full departmental changes will be instituted. We have invited Dr. Andrea Lunsford, Louise Hewlett Nixon Professor of English and Director of the Program in Writing and Rhetoric, as our Peck Composition Speaker in spring 2012; Dr. Lunsford is a specialist in how composition programs can update themselves to be more adaptable to the literacy skills necessary in current times.
  
- further customize the new handbooks for ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020 to emphasize the course objectives, the General Education Learning Outcomes, and the resources available to MTSU composition students. Dr. Dubek, Lower Division Director, has made specific significant changes

to the department handbooks for ENGL 1010 and ENGL 1020, customizing them for our students, our program, and our university. Dr. Jason Vance, from the James E. Walker Library on campus, contributed customized screen shots of library search engines that are particular to our university.

- provide new opportunities for professional development for adjuncts and full-time instructors. Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, will
  - continue the foundation account with grant monies donated by Bedford/St. Martin's, publishers of our new 1010 handbook *Easy Writer*, and McGraw-Hill, publishers of our new 1020 handbook, *Research Matters at MTSU*. Dr. Dubek and the Lower Division Committee will evaluate applications for travels funds for faculty to attend the annual Composition and Communication Conference, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English. Recipients will receive all travel expenses and will return to the department and host information sessions on composition topics.
- emphasize the 1020 course objectives for new hires and returning GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors. We will
  - guide all GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors to the General Education Faculty Resources and Lower Division FAQs web pages, located on the English Faculty website, that include the course learning and teaching objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for contingent faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in General Education courses.
  - provide more intensive oversight of General Education faculty. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are already reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department. Dr. Laura Dubek will receive reassigned time to conduct additional classroom observations.
- continue a new project that will send general education faculty into area high schools to learn about the kinds of writing our students do before they come to us. Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director; Dr. Ron Kates, K-12 Liaison; and Dr. Ellen Donovan, Director of the Middle Tennessee Writing Project, will
  - coordinate this three-year outreach project, a summer faculty learning community program, which will bring back information about how writing is being taught to students before students reach MTSU. This project, designed by Dr. Laura Dubek and supported by Dean Mark Byrnes from Liberal Arts, will allow essential information to be exchanged between local high schools and our department.
- emphasize the need for freshman writing courses to follow the guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of English with regard to class size. Dr. Tom Strawman and Dr. Laura Dubek will
  - make a request to upper administration that the current class size of 25 students per freshman writing class fall into NCTE guidelines: "No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement."
- emphasize the need for sufficient reassigned time for the Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, so she can focus necessary attention and time to the mentoring of our temporary English 1020 instructors.

7. Did you implement any plans to correct deficiencies based upon data obtained from the assessment in 2010-11?

The English Department has

- disseminated results of the assessment studies. Dr. Allison Smith, the assessment organizer, has
  - provided copies of the results to Dr. Tom Strawman, Department Chair; Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, Dr. Julie Myatt, English Coordinator of Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Dr. Wes Houp, Director of the University Writing Center.
  - emailed results to the faculty and GTA listservs.
- continued to focus on student management and coordination of basic information. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director,
  - formalized the requirement for all English 1020 instructors to take their classes to the library for at least one class period for a librarian-led research introduction.
- continued to investigate the role departmental grade inflation may play in less than adequate scores. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, and the English Lower Division Committee have
  - reviewed ENGL 1010 and 1020 syllabi and meticulously noted how each syllabus (for GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors) represented and fulfilled the Course Objectives. The results were given to each instructor with a request to revise any deficiencies. This syllabus review continues each year.
  - organized grade norming sessions for adjuncts/instructors in fall 2010 and spring 2011. Dr. Julie Myatt, Coordinator of GTAs, has also organized grade norming sessions for the GTAs.
- emphasized the 1020 course objectives for new hires and returning GTAs, adjuncts, and instructors. Dr. Laura Dubek, English Lower Division Director, has
  - created two new web pages—General Education Faculty Resources and Lower Division FAQs—that include the course objectives, teaching and learning objectives, sample syllabi and assignments, general information for General Education faculty, and specific assistance with grading, developing effective assignments, and judging written work in GE courses. Course objectives, syllabi, assignments, and grading are all reviewed in the annual evaluation of each GTA, adjunct, and instructor in the department.
- formalized the revision of the ENGL 1020 curriculum to be more closely aligned with the General Education Outcomes. The Lower Division Committee
  - selected new textbooks for ENGL 1020 that have a Writing Across the Curriculum focus and that better support the General Education Learning Outcomes.
  - selected new handbooks for both ENGL 1010 and 1020 that emphasize the distinctions between the two courses.
  - used the Syllabus Review to encourage more required reading and additional reading instruction in both ENGL 1010 and 1020 and more classroom workshops and peer review opportunities.
- provided new opportunities for professional development for adjuncts and full-time instructors. Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, has

- established a foundation account with grant monies donated by Bedford/St. Martin's, publishers of our new 1010 handbook *Easy Writer*, and McGraw-Hill, publishers of our new 1020 handbook, *Research Matters at MTSU*. Dr. Dubek and the Lower Division Committee evaluated applications for travels funds for faculty to attend the annual Composition and Communication Conference, sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English, and other conferences that allowed faculty to focus on improving their teaching of writing. Recipients received all travel expenses and will return to the department and host information sessions on composition topics.
- established adjunct and FTT teaching awards. Dr. Laura Dubek, Lower Division Director, and the Lower Division Committee have
  - created new teaching awards for adjunct and FTT instructors, funded by the grant monies described above. This recognition of some of the best teachers of writing in our department is a critical step in acknowledging the important work the members of our department do.

**Assessment of Critical Thinking  
Academic Year 2011-2012**

- 1. Identify the Performance-Funding test of general education used by your institution.**

California Critical Thinking Skills Test

- 2. If you used sampling as permitted by THEC, describe the method used.**

Sampling was not used.

- 3. Present the institutional mean scores or sub-scores on the Performance Funding instrument that your institution reviewed to assess students' comprehension and evaluation of arguments. If comparable scores for a peer group are available, also present them.**

MTSU = 17.1

National = 16.7

- 4. Summarize your impressions of the results yielded by the THEC test regarding critical thinking. Based upon your interpretations of the data, what conclusions emerge about student attainment of critical thinking skills?**

The CCTST requires students to draw inferences, make interpretations, analyze information, draw warranted inferences, identify claims and reasons, and evaluate the quality of arguments using brief passages, diagrams and charts. For the fifth consecutive year, MTSU students' critical thinking skills exceeded those of students taking the same test at universities across the country.

- 5. Do you plan any strategies to correct deficiencies or opportunities for improvement that emerged with respect to critical thinking? If so, describe them below.**

Critical thinking is addressed across the curriculum and in a number of university initiatives, including the following:

- Required General Education courses emphasize the development of critical thinking skills. The three required courses in the Communication category, in particular, provide incoming students with an introduction to the critical and analytical skills necessary for success in college. Small class size in these courses is essential to insure that students receive the individual attention they need to develop these skills. The General Education Committee has recommended that class size in the courses in the Communication category not exceed the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Communication Association.
- Instructors of UNIV 1010 will continue to assign textbooks that contain a critical thinking component in each chapter.
- Tutoring in the University Writing Center emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills in the writing process. Instructors will continue to encourage students to work with the Center's trained tutors.
- The University Library Research Coach service (which offers students in-depth, one-on-one sessions with a librarian) emphasizes critical thinking in finding and selecting the best books, articles, and database resources for projects, papers, and presentations. Instructors will continue to advise students to use this service.