Expected Outcomes:

Students in the ENGL 4810, the Technical Communication and Literacy capstone, will demonstrate effective written communication skills in the form of a substantial portfolio of work, in which they 1. write effective prose; 2. demonstrate mastery of effective editing principles using traditional and computer-based techniques; 3. discuss theories relevant to professional and public writing; 4. discuss the application of those theories in portfolio documents; 5. analyze and address a particular audience.

Related typical general education outcomes:

1. Information Literacy
2. Analytical and Critical Reading
7. Written Communication

Assessment methods

Method:

A check sheet assessing the learning outcomes was developed by the Technical Communication and Literacy faculty. During the capstone course, 14 students developed portfolios of creative work. The portfolios were assessed by five faculty members of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. Two committee members evaluated each paper with yes/no responses to the five questions above. If the raters disagreed on a question, a third rater judged the portfolio. Initial inter-rater reliability was 80 percent.

Findings:

Students performed at the following levels by item: 1. 78.6 percent (11/14) demonstrated they are able to write effective prose. 2. 85.7 percent (12/14) demonstrated mastery of effective editing principles using traditional and computer-based techniques. 3. 78.6 percent (11/14) discussed theories relevant to professional and public writing. 4. 78.6 percent (11/14) discussed how s/he has applied theories identified in item 3 to portfolio documents. 5. All (14/14) of the students analyzed and addressed a particular audience. Looking at the data another way, the results indicate that seventy-one percent of the students met all five criteria.

How did you use findings for improvement?

Students are doing well on addressing particular readership(s) and relatively well on editing. They do slightly less well with respect to writing effective prose and discussing and applying relevant theory. Although the substantial percentage difference between item 2 and items 3 and 4 reflects the work of only one student, faculty should continue to emphasize writing quality and helping students to demonstrate how their work reflects theories relevant to professional and public writing.

Additional comments:

None