

Fall 2007 Writing Program Survey Summary of Results

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The form as available on the Form Genie website (<https://jedi.tcnj.edu/webteam/cgi-bin/formgenie/formgenie.pl?form=22071>) was pasted into a word document. Summarized data and analyses are presented in red. In most cases data are summarized as a function of course level taught.

Description: Faculty Perceptions, Expectations, and Practices. Please complete this anonymous survey to help the Writing Program better serve TCNJ faculty.

Instructions: When completing this survey, it will be most helpful if you think about just one of the courses you teach or one type of course (e.g., introductory level courses or upper-division courses), rather than all of your courses. Please feel free to complete the survey again for another course or a different type of course.

A total of 92 responses to the survey were received.

Q1. This course is

Answer	Frequency
100 level (not FSP)	4
200 level	22
300 level	26
400 level	9
FSP	31

Q2. The students in this course are mostly

Answer	Frequency
First year students	39
Sophomores	16
Juniors	18
Seniors	9
Other (Mixed)	10

Q3. This course has

Answer	Frequency
A mix of majors and non-majors	65
Only majors	27

Q4. I rate the quality of student writing in this class as

Quality	Level					<i>Total by Quality</i>
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
Excellent	0	1			1	2
Good	1	5	12	7	16	41
Average	3	13	11	2	13	42
Below Average	0	2	2	0	0	4
Poor	0	1	1	0	1	3
Total by Level	4	22	26	9	31	92

Q5. If this class has a mix of majors and non-majors, do you perceive a difference in the quality of writing between the two groups?

(Note: While 65 respondents indicated their class had a mixture of major and non-majors, 67 respondents answered this question).

Difference	Level					<i>Total by Quality</i>
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
Yes	0	3	7	2	2	14
No	4	16	8	2	23	53
Total by Difference	4	19	15	4	25	67

Q6. Which group has stronger writing skills? To what do you attribute this difference?

Long Answers Provided in Appendix.

Q7. When students enter your classes, in which areas do you think they should already have proficiency? (Proficiency here defined as: a basic level of skillfulness and competency such that you need not spend time explicitly teaching these things in your class.) PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

Proficiency	Level					<i>Total by Proficiency</i>
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
Explaining how an example supports the main point	4	16	19	6	26	71
Analyzing or interpreting a set of data (or text or image)	3	8	16	5	12	44
Providing support for a claim (or thesis)	2	17	21	5	24	69
Applying a theory or concept in a new context or to a previously un-encountered situation	2	3	13	4	8	30
Thinking critically about the quality of others' research	2	8	13	3	8	34
Identifying patterns or connections among ideas	3	12	18	7	22	62
Analyzing the structure and logic both of one's own and others' texts	2	6	14	4	13	39
Comparing and contrasting two theories, time periods, works of art, texts, etc.	2	6	18	4	15	45
Summarizing	2	19	21	8	23	73
Paraphrasing	3	16	21	6	19	65
Using licensed databases in your discipline	0	4	8	1	2	15
Using discipline-specific conventions and genres (such as	0	4	10	5	4	23

Proficiency	Level					Total by
passive or active voice, lab reports, the literature review in a research paper)						
Using complex sentence structures	4	15	17	7	23	66
Using transitional and subordinating words/phrases to indicate the relationship among ideas	3	17	20	5	20	65
Using standard English grammar, such as: subject-verb agreement, plurals, possessives, pronoun reference	4	18	24	7	29	82
Proof-reading for typos, misspellings, and other errors	4	20	23	8	29	84
Other (in appendix)	1	3	5	1	2	12
Total by Level	41	192	281	86	279	879

Q8. Which of the following best describes the type of feedback you provide on student papers?

Feedback Type	Level					Total by Feedback Type
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
A sentence or two at the end which provides an overall assessment of the paper.	1	0	0	0	0	1
A sentence or two at the end which provides an overall assessment of the paper, plus marginal or in-line corrections on structural / grammatical / spelling errors.	0	2	1	0	2	5
A sentence or two at the end which provides an overall assessment of the paper, plus marginal or in-line comments on ideas / logic / organization.	0	3	0	0	2	5
A sentence or two at the end which provides an overall assessment of the paper, plus marginal or in-line comments on both ideas/logic/organization and structural/grammatical/spelling errors.	2	3	6	1	6	18
A paragraph-length note at the end dealing with the main areas of accomplishment and/or difficulty, plus marginal comments that directly back up these final comments.	0	5	9	4	5	23
A paragraph-length note at the end dealing with the main areas of accomplishment and/or difficulty, plus marginal comments on smaller or miscellaneous issues (either about content or errors in format, grammar, etc.)	1	5	8	1	9	24
Other (in Appendix)	0	4	2	3	7	16
Total by Level	4	22	26	9	31	92

Q9. I usually give feedback on student papers in the following format:

Feedback Format	Level					<i>Total by Feedback Format</i>
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
Hand-written on a hard copy.	1	18	14	4	13	50
Electronically, using "track changes" or other tools in Word	1	1	2	1	5	10
Using a rubric (paper)	0	1	4	2	6	13
Using an electronic rubric	0	0	0	1	3	4
Other (in Appendix)	2	2	6	1	4	15
<i>Total by Level</i>	4	22	26	9	31	92

Q10. Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the writing ability of TCNJ students?

Satisfaction	Level					<i>Total by Satisfaction</i>
	100	200	300	400	FSP	
Very Satisfied	0	0	2	0	4	6
Somewhat Satisfied	1	8	9	3	12	33
Satisfied	3	6	6	2	8	25
Somewhat Unsatisfied	0	7	7	4	7	25
Very Unsatisfied	0	1	2	0	0	3
<i>Total by Level</i>	4	22	26	9	31	92

I welcome your comments and contributions. Please feel free to contact me directly at ext. 2864 or goldschm@tcnj.edu.

Appendix

Contains "long answer" data, including course level, student level and major/non-major/mix.

Q6. Which group has stronger writing skills? To what do you attribute this difference?

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q5. Difference in Quality	Q6. Reason for Difference
7	200	FR	majors	no	Although I don't see a difference between majors (since it is primarily majors), I do see a difference among students according to their level. First year writers typically struggle with citation standards, requirements for citations, and integrating research into their arguments.
10	200	MIX	mix	yes	The English majors are, as a group MUCH better than the non-English majors. I assume that they major in English because they are comparatively strong in reading literature and in writing. The English majors were probably also more strongly motivated to do well. (It's a course in poetry and counts toward the major - also counts for Liberal Learning credit.)
18	200	SO	mix	yes	Generally non-business majors have better writing skills (the class is writing intensive)
20	200	MIX	mix	no	About half the class consists of Sociology ?Anthropology majors. The rest are spread across the disciplines, but mostly from the schools of Education and Culture & Society. In my several years of teaching this writing-intensive course, I would say that over time the best writers have been Sociology majors, but the not by much.
22	200	SO	mix	no	English majors know the conventions, but developing a coherent, authoritative voice is difficult for all.
26	200	SO	mix	yes	The difference is in their intellectual abilities, their drive, their interest in the classroom.
32	300	JR	majors	no	Very few non-majors. No possible comparison.
34	300	MIX	majors	yes	This class (POL 335) is almost entirely POL and INT majors. The INT majors have stronger writing and critical skills. Generally, INT and POL students are strong in these areas. However, there are a couple INT and a few POL students whose skills are so poor (C range) that they pull down both averages. These students have recently entered TCNJ (as FR or transfers) or consistently have had poor writing skills during their years at TCNJ.
42	300	JR	mix	no	The group I see that has the strongest writing skills are the English majors.
43	300	MIX	mix	yes	Majors are familiar with structure and expectations of a history paper.
45	300	JR	mix	yes	WGS majors and English majors generally have far superior writing skills. I assume these skills are due to secondary school instruction and focus on reading.
46	300	SO	mix	no	In the last several years, students' writing skills have decreased significantly--in the formulation of a topic, in the construction of a thesis, in what they see as substantiating evidence, in the difference between paraphrase and quotation, in attention to documentation style and detail. I believe it's because we have dropped writing courses in the first couple of years of college. The writing intensive courses just don't cut it.
47	300	MIX	mix	yes	History majors generally have stronger writing skills since the academic program requires a lot of writing from their freshmen year. However, other majors such as English also have good skills.

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q5. Difference in Quality	Q6. Reason for Difference
50	300	JR	mix	yes	Majors have stronger writing skills, particularly those who have taken courses with me before, as they have used previous templates for producing current work.
51	300	JR	mix	yes	Generally, I find that my non-majors have better writing skills than my majors. I attribute this to the fact that our department (Music) is very focused on skills development in our discipline, and as a result the writing tends to be weaker. They do not use a great deal of writing in their coursework, in comparison to other departments.
52	300	JR	mix	yes	By and large, the best writers in the class are majors, but not all majors in the course are strong writers. A few of the non-majors also write very well, but I would say that a higher percentage of majors are excellent writers than of non-majors. I don't know what to attribute this to. Maybe it is because some of the majors have had other courses with me and have gotten used to my idiosyncracies. Maybe it is because political science majors have to write more than the non-majors and have gotten better at it.
53	400	SR	majors	yes	It is a major specific course, and unless the non-major is in a life science major (i.e., Biology) it would be difficult for them to provide the scientific writing and analysis as expected.
57	400	SR	majors	yes	English, Biology, and History majors are generally stronger writers than other majors.
65	FSP	FR	mix	no	There are no English majors in my FSP.
66	FSP	FR	mix	yes	English majors are--no surprise--better writers.
74	FSP	FR	mix		The quality of writing has no apparent tie to a particular major. In most cases it's not that they *can't* write well, but that they're sloppy and they don't seem to grasp the concept of writing multiple drafts.
77	FSP	FR	mix	no	Generally speaking, those who plan to study English or communications have better writing skills and are more comfortable with the written word. Then again, other students who're planning to study science or business are also proficient writers. I believe it all comes down to one's background. Some high schools emphasize writing and demand higher quality research papers. Others do not. Consequently, the students who have not been taught end up floundering.
78	FSP	FR	mix		n/a
79	FSP	FR	mix		Not applicable. This course does not fit within any disciplinary format.
80	FSP	FR	mix	no	this is an FSP; has a variety of majors; only a couple English majors, methinks; can't really make an observation on that basis.
82	FSP	FR	mix	no	? not relevant question, I have no majors in class.

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q5. Difference in Quality	Q6. Reason for Difference
83	FSP	FR	mix	yes	Any questionnaire of this sort is too blunt an instrument. There are two History majors in one of my two FSP sections. The two majors, who have become friends with two others who are interested in the course, have set the pace all semester. They read more carefully, think more critically, and take more pains with their essays. Having said that, however, I will also say that the overall level of writing has definitely improved since the semester started. All students will soon have completed six different writing assignments. I'm pleased at the way a number of them have taken to heart pointers that I have given them, and that they have picked up from William Zinsser's book, <i>On Writing Well</i> . The 'expectations' question below is difficult to answer. I'd like to think that students strong enough to enter TCNJ would have all these abilities, but many do not. The 'satisfaction' question at the end is also difficult to answer. Writing ability is not just some kind of independent variable, divorced from everything else. The students whom I enjoy teaching are the ones who engage with the materials in a course. In my two FSP sections this semester, a number of students engaged at least intermittently, above and beyond the core of four who have run on a fast track all semester. My overall satisfaction with teaching FSP courses is high enough to keep me doing it, though I'll try a different topic in Fall 2008. Dan Crofts History Department
84	FSP	FR	mix	no	Note that there are only non-majors in this class, that was not an option above.
88	FSP	FR	mix	no	Biology, English, History majors have better writing skills in general. They read better than others.
92	FSP	FR	mix	no	Almost all students are non-majors.

These are the “Other” answers supplied for Q7. When students enter your classes, in which areas do you think they should already have proficiency?

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q7. Other Proficiency
2	100	FR	mix	Differences between there and their then and than etc that are not just spelling but usage issues
5	200	SO	majors	How to write simple sentences to explain technical ideas.
10	200	MIX	mix	This depends on the course. In my 400-level courses I expect them to be able to apply theories do reasonably sophisticated research etc. I don't expect this in 100- and 200-level courses. It also depends on whether the course is largely/exclusively for English majors.
16	200	SO	mix	My course is a Spanish course so I expect standard Spanish grammar
30	300	JR	majors	APA style
35	300	SR	majors	using periods and commas
41	300	MIX	mix	standard collegiate format
42	300	JR	mix	citation
51	300	JR	mix	use of library research and standard formatting for Bibliography and References (footnotes)
56	400	SR	majors	blank
68	FSP	FR	mix	basic algebra math skills
82	FSP	FR	mix	bibliographical citations in-text citations

These are the “Other” answers supplied for Q8. Which of the following best describes the type of feedback you provide on student papers?

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q8. Other Feedback Type
5	200	SO	majors	I try to correct the students work through out the technical report.
6	200	FR	majors	notes on margins
10	200	MIX	mix	It varies but I give substantial feedback especially on the weaker papers. I now accompany each paper with an evaluative form in which I rate the student's performance on each about about 8-10 criteria. These forms are included in their syllabi right after the associated assignment sheet so that they will know right from the start the criteria that will be used to evaluate their work.
11	200	SO	mix	two or three par. of comments at end plus margin comments on grammar and content issues. additional comment: it would be great if SOCS were enhanced to facilitate commenting electronically without the need to save to hard drive and then resave to SOCS for each paper.
53	400	SR	majors	what ever is needed
60	400	SR	mix	Both of the last two
61	400	SR	mix	Several pages worth of feedback plus comments written on the papers themselves.
63	FSP	FR	mix	A paragraph-length note at the end dealing with the main areas of accomplishment and/or difficulty without marginal notes
64	FSP	FR	mix	comments all through the paper.
65	FSP	FR	mix	First draft: Meet for a 20 minute conference. Final draft: Use a paper rubric that has a check off plus space for a comment related to each criterion.
66	FSP	FR	mix	in-text remarks and a rubric at end
67	FSP	FR	mix	marginal or in-line corrections for errors in conventions and structural suggestions plus a scored rubric
68	FSP	FR	mix	Use extensive grading rubric along with many specific comments
69	FSP	FR	mix	A page-length note at the end dealing with the main areas of accomplishment and/or difficulty plus marginal comments on smaller or miscellaneous issues (either about content or errors in format grammar etc.)

These are the “Other” answers supplied for Q9. I usually give feedback on student papers in the following format:

ID	Course Level	Student Level	Major	Q9. Other Feedback Format
1	100	Mix	mix	email
2	100	FR	mix	hand written on copy and on a separate rubric paper
11	200	SO	mix	typed pars of comment on essay
12	200	FR	mix	electronically using MS Word comments track changes function etc.
27	300	JR	majors	Electronically using Microsoft Word
29	300	JR	majors	electronically following a rubric but discursive in form rather than checking off items on a rubric
30	300	JR	majors	Electronically using rubric and text comments
31	300	SO	majors	paper rubric plus hand written on hard copy-- a better survey would not force one answer choice!
41	300	MIX	mix	comments in a separate word document
42	300	JR	mix	I use a rubric and hand-written notes
61	400	SR	mix	typed and hand-written on other assignments I use a rubric
63	FSP	FR	mix	Electronically using Microsoft Word
65	FSP	FR	mix	See comment above: First draft: Meet for a 20 minute conference. Final draft: Use a paper rubric that has a check off plus space for a comment related to each criterion.
67	FSP	FR	mix	Marginal or in-line comments/corrections and a paper rubric
70	FSP	FR	mix	Rubric and handwritten comments on hard copy