

FYWP Follow-Up Assessment 2008 – Description of the Study

Background

In 2004, the FYWP began an assessment project to address two questions:

- 1) Given our research-based understanding that qualities of good writing are context-specific, what are the qualities of good writing in our (EMU) contexts?
- 2) To what extent are these qualities demonstrated in final portfolios from ENGL 121?

Based on the findings from this assessment and from ongoing work with Halle librarians Suzanne Gray and Sarah Fabian were working to improve the interaction that FY writing courses, especially ENGL 121, had with Halle librarians and the research experience. Thus, the FYWP and the librarians joined together to address these issues.

Curriculum Revision

Through the summer of 2007, a group of FYWP instructors, along with Gray and Fabian, worked to revise the research process in ENGL 121. This work included:

- Incorporating information literacy outcomes more clearly into ENGL 121
- Developing a clearer articulation of research processes into the framework for ENGL 121
- Developing and/or identifying existing strategies to support each step of research processes throughout the entirety of ENGL 121

To learn about the effects of these curriculum revisions, in Winter 2008 we will conduct an assessment that will address the questions,

1. What do students do with sources in their ENGL 121 classes?

2. To what extent do portfolios produced by students engaging in the revised curriculum demonstrate qualities of “good research?” These qualities are derived from the 2004-5 focus groups and from additional descriptive assessment conducted within the FYWP during the 2006-7 academic year.

Research Procedures

For the current assessment, we will gather two new sets of data:

- 6 portfolios each (high/medium/low grades) from 3 instructors who are implementing the revised process, and 3 who are not.

Because these portfolios will not be graded until the end of the term, we will collect consent forms from all students willing to participate in the study, and photocopy only the portfolios of students chosen to participate.

We will ask students selected for the study to include all materials connected to their research processes (including their annotated bibliographies/library source reports [assignments typically incorporated into 121 classes]) in their portfolios.

We will also ask instructors to write a reflection on how they structured the research work in their classes and why they did it as they did so that we can have a broader framework through which to understand the portfolios.

Once portfolios are collected, a group of raters (FYWP instructors and librarians) will engage in two activities to undertake investigation of the questions above:

1. A descriptive protocol to describe the research-related features of the portfolio (drawn from protocols developed by the National Writing Project and CUNY's Looking Both Ways);
2. Portfolio rating using an assessment rubric developed from the 'qualities' identified above.

As with data from the 2004-6 assessment, results from this assessment will be used to continue to improve the FYWP's curriculum and pedagogical approach. Any dissemination of study results will be in the context of research describing the FYWP's approach to assessment and how that work informs curriculum development.