

**Summary: CLASS ILO Sharing Sessions**  
**Written Communication and Information Literacy**  
**October 2019**

**Background**

The Educational Effectiveness Council (EEC) representatives from CLASS (Kaatz, Komorosky, Nielsen) planned and facilitated four sessions to discuss the ILO data on written communication and information literacy with college faculty. The four sessions were offered on different days and times to increase the likelihood that faculty would be available to attend one session.

These sessions were announced at the CLASS Council of Chairs, and invitations were emailed to CLASS chairs, CLASS regular faculty, and CLASS lecturer faculty. The emailed invitations included a link to a Google form for RSVPs and a zip file with ILO and related data. The data included in the zip file were CLASS and CSUEB scores for the ILO in written communication; CLASS distribution of scores by domain for written communication; CLASS WST data; NSSE snapshot 2017; and NSSE reading/writing responses 2016, 2017. Targeted invitations were also sent out to composition faculty and to faculty teaching writing-intensive C4 and D4 courses.

The ILO sharing sessions lasted 50-60 minutes and were held in the CLASS dean's conference room. Sessions began with introductions of participants and an overview of the ILO assessment process on our campus and other available institutional data. For the open discussion part of the sessions, guiding questions were provided as were slides of CLASS ILO data, WST data, and NSSE data on reading and writing. The information literacy assessment did not yield usable results, so the focus of the open discussion was on the written communication results.

## Participation

Twelve faculty signed up to attend one of the four sessions, and six attended the session for which they registered. Faculty RSVPs came from the Departments of AGES, ART, COMM, ENGL, ES, HDEV, and MLL.

Session	RSVPs	Attendance	Departments
Wednesday 10/16/19 10-11am	2	1	COMM HDEV
Thursday 10/17/19 12:15-1:15pm	1	0	ART
Monday 10/21/19 4:00-5:00pm	5	2	AGES COMM ENGL (2) MLL
Tuesday 10/22/19 12:15-1:15pm	4	3	ENGL (2) ES (2)

## Summary of Themes from ILO Sharing Sessions

Each sharing session had at least one EEC facilitator. The open discussion began with looking at the slides with ILO written communication results (*i.e.*, CLASS and CSUEB scores for the ILO in written communication; CLASS distribution of scores by domain for written communication). After those two slides, each sharing session took different directions in terms of the data that participants wanted to discuss. What follows is a thematic summary of the ideas and issues that emerged from the discussions at the three sessions that had participants.

### *ILO Assessment Process*

- Given the variation in student artifacts, how valid are the results?
- There was high interrater reliability for the written communication results despite the variation in writing prompts.
- Analytic scoring is helpful in seeing general trends in writing strengths and challenges for each criterion in the ILO rubric.

### *Reflections on Participants' Teaching Practices*

Participants talked about changes they have or would like to make in their own teaching as it relates to writing required in their classes. These changes included the following.

- Modify own rubric for major writing assignment by drawing on language from the ILO written communication rubric;
- Recognize the importance of making writing assignments relevant to students' needs and goals;
- Provide clear and detailed directions in writing prompts to make a difference in writing output;
- Indicate audience and purpose in writing assignments;
- Provide more choice in writing assignments;
- Include more scaffolding for major writing assignments;
- Have students write for real audiences;
- Have students write about same content for different audiences (*e.g.*, text for a podcast and a research paper; letter to the editor and a formal paper).

### *Reflections on Participants' Students*

- CLASS students performed well overall on the ILO assessment. This was somewhat surprising to some.
- CLASS data on organization, cohesion, clarity (lower than university average) paralleled participants' experience with their own students.
- Literature reviews and other writing assignments that require synthesis are challenging to teach and challenging for students to complete.
- Difficulties with synthesizing written text may be related to difficulties with reading academic articles and other texts.
- Some students have difficulties with locating appropriate materials (*e.g.*, giving up after one try at a key word search in a subscription database).
- There is a need to recognize the emotional aspects of reading and writing in an academic context.
- Uncertainty about how to best support ESL/multilingual writers was expressed.
- For students likely to score at the 1-2 level on the ILO rubric, individualized and specific feedback seems to help.
- The conversational style used by some students in formal writing assignments is an ongoing concern.
- Is it enough to evaluate writing on content and organization? How important is grammar, writing with an accent, or other technical aspects of academic writing?
- There were concerns that our first-year students who most need support on their academic writing now receive 15 to 30 weeks of composition instruction compared to pre-EO 1110 programs that provided 20 to 40 weeks of composition

instruction. This may impact GI 2025 goals if first-year students are less prepared for writing at the sophomore level and beyond.

### *Closing the Loop Ideas*

- Review CAPR reports for assessment information on written communication within departments and share best local practices with campus;
- Provide more assignment samples for each of the ILO rubrics;
- Improve the commenting function on Blackboard assignment submissions in order to support more individualized feedback on student writing;
- Create faculty development workshops/suggestions about talking about writing in syllabus, class, assignment descriptions;
- Collaborate with ASI to offer workshops in professionalism as it relates to academic and professional writing;
- Create opportunities to share ILO and related data with students;
- Encourage departments to organize brown bag lunches to discuss student writing/reading needs (similar to what HIST is doing to support their first generation students);
- Encourage or require departments to develop a writing-intensive major course (capstone or second-tier GWAR course);
- Create lower-division writing classes for each department, give double WTU for these classes to allow for appropriate feedback to students and ongoing assessment of student needs in terms of writing;
- Reestablish Clusters/First Year Experience to give students more reading and writing experience while building background knowledge in one or a small number of academic disciplines;
- Create opportunities for composition faculty and faculty in other disciplines to share their teaching practices and expectations around writing as well as sample prompts and student responses to those prompts;
- Address WST scoring problems where students are scored lower for using a forecasting thesis that many disciplines encourage or expect;
- Conduct research to understand more about why CLASS scores on organization, cohesion, clarity were lower than the university average (Do CLASS writing prompts tend to be more complex than those in other colleges? How does complexity of prompts correlate with written communication scores?);
- Conduct case study research on students who are doing well in terms of understanding key concepts in their discipline, but are struggling with academic writing;

- Create a system to collect and analyze samples of student writing from their first year of study through graduation to better understand students' writing development over the course of their undergraduate studies;
- Hire a tenure-track faculty member with specialization in Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines;
- Hire more faculty with expertise in writing pedagogy and with a commitment to supporting students in their writing development;
- Hire and train faculty and/or peer tutors in the SCAA to focus on high need writers;
- Post annual GVAR report for CSUEB online so that colleges and departments can more easily track what is happening with their majors;
- Re-launch the Curriculog proposal to change first-tier GVAR classes (ENGL 300, 301) from 3 units to 4 units since these classes serve students likely to score at the 1 to 2 level on the ILO written communication rubric;
- Add ENGL 109, College Writing Lab, for GVAR and other writing-intensive classes;
- Develop clearer guidelines for ENGL 109;
- Provide small group tutoring on sentence-level issues, especially for transfer students who need first-tier GVAR classes (ENGL 300, 301);
- Include more in-class reading and writing opportunities for students;
- Include more "reflecting on writing" assignments within writing-intensive courses.