

## **General Education Annual Course Assessment Form**

Course Number/Title: **METR100W/Writing Workshop**

GE Area: Z

Results Reported for: **AY 15-16**

# of sections: 1

# of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Alison Bridger (as dept chair)

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Department Chair: Alison Bridger

College: Science

**Instructions:** Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. The report will be electronically submitted by the department chair to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

### **Part 1**

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

We grabbed two sets of data since we think we failed to gather assessment data last year.

**SLO#2:** "Students should be able to express (explain, analyze, develop, and criticize) ideas effectively, including ideas encountered in multiple readings and expressed in different forms of discourse."

**and**

**SLO#3:** "Organize and develop essays and documents for both professional and general audiences, including appropriate editorial standards for citing primary and secondary sources."

(2) What were the results of the assessment? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

Nine students enrolled in the class: four meteorology majors, three physics majors and two geology majors.

The goal is to get the students to stop writing as "students" and to start writing as "professionals". The students write a short essay during the first week in class to provide a benchmark to see how far they have to go. That first essay is typically filled with student errors and poor habits, including wordiness, case and tense issues, non-parallel constructs, and improper punctuation.

The class consists of weekly assignments that often focus on a particular topic. The primary grading is via two in-class presentations and two longer term papers. The first term paper

and presentation is at midterm, and the second set serves as the final. The students choose their own topics, but must have the instructor's consent. The midterm paper and presentation are on the same topic – likewise for the final paper and presentation. It is emphasized that the paper and the presentation should be written for a professional audience, with proper documentation and appropriate referencing standards.

Feedback is given to the students after each assignment, with suggestions on how to improve. A fascinating phenomenon/observation is that students tend to do well when there is a focused assignment (e.g. limiting wordiness), but not quite so well when they have to put it together in a longer assignment.

The midterm assignments are graded harshly. Students try, but they often write like students (e.g. too wordy to meet strict word counts, tense and case mismatches), and typically speak like a student when presenting (e.g. too nervous often due to poor preparation, or “I read a paper that...”).

By the final presentation and paper, these students improved markedly. Most were ready to attend a professional conference to make a presentation (in terms of the quality of their work). Similarly, most were ready to write drafts for review by professional colleagues, or prepare a thesis for graduation.

The papers, including the weekly assignments, and the presentations were used to assess both SLO2 and SLO3. To write the papers and prepare the presentations, the students are expected to access peer-reviewed articles from professional journals; too few such articles results in lowering their grades. The final grades were: 4 “A”s, 2 “A-”s, 1 “B” and 2 “C”s.

The assessment reveals that most – but not all – students in the class did well at bringing up their writing and presentation skills to the level required of a college junior in a technical major. In other words, 7 of the 9 students by the end *were* rendered capable of writing an abstract or technical report suitable for submission to a technical meeting or organization. The two students who got “C’s” did less well. Not every student leaving SJSU will be able to write at the Shakespeare level, or its equivalent in our technical world.

- (3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

None planned at the moment, but we will have a new instructor in Fall.

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

- (4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

We believe the course continues to meet area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment.