

WITH NO APOLOGY: TEACHING TO THE TEST

A question on the entrance diagnostic exam at Chicago State University read:

Should students have to demonstrate certain skills before being allowed to graduate from high school?

Below, Essay Sample One, is the entering student's response.

Regrade response _____

		D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄	
1	■
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

DP-2684-2/75

Rosemary Hake is Director of Basic Writing and The Tutoring Center at Chicago State University.

ChicagoStateUniversity

NAME _____ SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____
 LAST _____ ADDRESS _____
 FIRST _____ M. L. _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 DATE _____ 6Q / 128 - 222F
 INSTRUCTOR _____ Grader number (s) _____
 MAJOR _____ Grader response _____
 Regrade response _____

that the student is ready for the experience ahead.

Although the knowledge that the students achieved helps them a great deal, all that can be learned in a high school is all a person can expect a student too know. Knowledge of knowing just how to cope with the many situations in life is great. High school graduates have this little knowledge. It might be the beginning of the experiences they might find themselves in, but at least this is the start. Nothing can qualify more better, than the experience of knowing.

Knowledge and the ability to cope with the many situations in

	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄
1	0000	0000	0000	0000
2	0000	0000	0000	0000
3	0000	0000	0000	0000
4	0000	0000	0000	0000
5	0000	0000	0000	0000
6	0000	0000	0000	0000
7	0000	0000	0000	0000
8	0000	0000	0000	0000
9	0000	0000	0000	0000
10	0000	0000	0000	0000
11	0000	0000	0000	0000
12	0000	0000	0000	0000
13	0000	0000	0000	0000
14	0000	0000	0000	0000
15	0000	0000	0000	0000
16	0000	0000	0000	0000
17	0000	0000	0000	0000
18	0000	0000	0000	0000
19	0000	0000	0000	0000
20	0000	0000	0000	0000
21	0000	0000	0000	0000
22	0000	0000	0000	0000
23	0000	0000	0000	0000
24	0000	0000	0000	0000
25	0000	0000	0000	0000
26	0000	0000	0000	0000
27	0000	0000	0000	0000
28	0000	0000	0000	0000
29	0000	0000	0000	0000
30	0000	0000	0000	0000
31	0000	0000	0000	0000
32	0000	0000	0000	0000
33	0000	0000	0000	0000
34	0000	0000	0000	0000
35	0000	0000	0000	0000
36	0000	0000	0000	0000
37	0000	0000	0000	0000
38	0000	0000	0000	0000
39	0000	0000	0000	0000
40	0000	0000	0000	0000

OP-2684 2/75

NAME _____ SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____
 LAST _____ ADDRESS _____
 FIRST _____ M.I. _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 DATE _____ 6Q / 128 - 222F _____
 INSTRUCTOR _____ Grader number (s) _____
 MAJOR _____ Regrade response _____

school at home, just the total environment by which the student is surrounded by. The student has the ability to do anything. Ability should be most emphasized in the high schools because without ~~achieve~~ ability, which mean the effort, the student can not achieve in any way. High school graduation should base their requirements around ability. The ability to learn, the ability to cope with problems and many situations that the student as a person have to cope with in life.

Another major requirement that a student should have is what is the ability to face reality with one self. Reality is an experience that is going to happen. Mental reactions to real situation

	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

ChicagoStateUniversity

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____ - _____ - _____

NAME _____
 LAST _____ ADDRESS _____
 FIRST _____ M.I. _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DATE _____ 6Q / 128 - 222F

INSTRUCTOR _____ Grader number (s) _____
 Grader response _____

MAJOR _____ Regrade response _____

tuons can upset the student. He has to be able to expect what lie ahead. He has to govern his life around reality. This student have to think and be able to make decisions Decision that will benefit him in his fall adventure ahead. Therefore, the requirements for a high school graduate, should he she be able to learn the ability to expect what's ahead, the right use of knowledge that one has, with all ability added together that high school graduate can achieve in society.

	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

DP 2694-2/75

This is not an isolated example, nor a hypothetical paper. It is a fact of life at urban Chicago State University (CSU), as at many other colleges and universities in the country. The fact, evidenced by the above entering test paper, is that a high proportion of our students arrive unable to write competently. The question—again one confronting many English departments besides ours—is what can be done to insure that such students are not equally poor writers when it comes time for them to

leave the university. The purpose of this article is to describe the program of testing and instruction we have developed over the past several years at Chicago State to see that our students meet at least a minimal standard of competence in writing.

An example of that minimal competence is the following paper, written by the same student under the same circumstances after he had completed English II. To complete the two composition courses took this student one solid year. During that year, he was enrolled in a structured writing class for three terms—namely Composition I twice and Composition II once (See Appendix A for this student’s failing and passing Composition I exams, Essay Samples Two and Three). The student also received individual tutoring for one term. A question on his Composition II exit proficiency was:

Should foreign students be required to pass an English proficiency exam?

Below, Essay Sample Four, is the student’s response.

Regrade response _____

	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40

DP-2884-2/75

ChicagoStateUniversity

NAME _____ SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____
 LAST _____ ADDRESS _____
 FIRST _____ MI _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 DATE _____ 6Q / 128 - 222F
 INSTRUCTOR _____ Grader number (s) _____
 MAJOR _____ Grader response _____
 Regrade response _____

labor, require a knowledge of at least conversational English. Persons of foreign origin would have difficulty even arriving at intended destinations if they could not speak some English. The implication of this can certainly be extended to include the foreign college student. Any person that is unable to speak English would be incapable of succeeding in any average American college or university.

The foreign student, if he does not have adequate knowledge of the English language, faces a major problem. However, the American college system cannot be dramatically changed to fit these students' needs. The system lacks the material or human resources for this.

	D ₁	D ₂	D ₃	D ₄
1	0000	0000	0000	0000
2	0000	0000	0000	0000
3	0000	0000	0000	0000
4	0000	0000	0000	0000
5	0000	0000	0000	0000
6	0000	0000	0000	0000
7	0000	0000	0000	0000
8	0000	0000	0000	0000
9	0000	0000	0000	0000
10	0000	0000	0000	0000
11	0000	0000	0000	0000
12	0000	0000	0000	0000
13	0000	0000	0000	0000
14	0000	0000	0000	0000
15	0000	0000	0000	0000
16	0000	0000	0000	0000
17	0000	0000	0000	0000
18	0000	0000	0000	0000
19	0000	0000	0000	0000
20	0000	0000	0000	0000
21	0000	0000	0000	0000
22	0000	0000	0000	0000
23	0000	0000	0000	0000
24	0000	0000	0000	0000
25	0000	0000	0000	0000
26	0000	0000	0000	0000
27	0000	0000	0000	0000
28	0000	0000	0000	0000
29	0000	0000	0000	0000
30	0000	0000	0000	0000
31	0000	0000	0000	0000
32	0000	0000	0000	0000
33	0000	0000	0000	0000
34	0000	0000	0000	0000
35	0000	0000	0000	0000
36	0000	0000	0000	0000
37	0000	0000	0000	0000
38	0000	0000	0000	0000
39	0000	0000	0000	0000
40	0000	0000	0000	0000

DP 2894-2/75

MAJOR

Regrade response

Therefore, the foreign student must make an effort to learn English.

Many colleges in all parts of the country offer courses in English for the foreign student. This provides an excellent opportunity for the student to learn the fundamentals of English before attempting to study in his intended major field. In this way, the student will be gaining the skills of the English language. He will also be learning about college life. He will then feel ~~with~~ more comfortable when enrolling in general college courses.

An English proficiency exam will give insight to the college administrators, as well as to the foreign student. Both parties

DP 2694-2/75

D₁ D₂ D₃ D₄

1	.....	.....	.....	.....
2	.....	.....	.....	.....
3	.....	.....	.....	.....
4	.....	.....	.....	.....
5	.....	.....	.....	.....
6	.....	.....	.....	.....
7	.....	.....	.....	.....
8	.....	.....	.....	.....
9	.....	.....	.....	.....
10	.....	.....	.....	.....
11	.....	.....	.....	.....
12	.....	.....	.....	.....
13	.....	.....	.....	.....
14	.....	.....	.....	.....
15	.....	.....	.....	.....
16	.....	.....	.....	.....
17	.....	.....	.....	.....
18	.....	.....	.....	.....
19	.....	.....	.....	.....
20	.....	.....	.....	.....
21	.....	.....	.....	.....
22	.....	.....	.....	.....
23	.....	.....	.....	.....
24	.....	.....	.....	.....
25	.....	.....	.....	.....
26	.....	.....	.....	.....
27	.....	.....	.....	.....
28	.....	.....	.....	.....
29	.....	.....	.....	.....
30	.....	.....	.....	.....
31	.....	.....	.....	.....
32	.....	.....	.....	.....
33	.....	.....	.....	.....
34	.....	.....	.....	.....
35	.....	.....	.....	.....
36	.....	.....	.....	.....
37	.....	.....	.....	.....
38	.....	.....	.....	.....
39	.....	.....	.....	.....
40	.....	.....	.....	.....

MAJOR

Regrade response

The college and the student will benefit if the foreign ^{student} has adequate knowledge of the English language.

D₁ D₂ D₃ D₄

1	.....	.....	.....	.....
2	.....	.....	.....	.....
3	.....	.....	.....	.....
4	.....	.....	.....	.....
5	.....	.....	.....	.....
6	.....	.....	.....	.....
7	.....	.....	.....	.....
8	.....	.....	.....	.....
9	.....	.....	.....	.....
10	.....	.....	.....	.....
11	.....	.....	.....	.....
12	.....	.....	.....	.....

In both instances the student was given a general content question and one hour to write an essay response. The results of all four of this student's exams are listed on a computer outprint (see Appendix B).

Two points about our approach should be mentioned at the outset. One has to do simply with the type of writing on which our efforts are focused. It should be understood that our concern is with that practical type of composition known as the expository essay—the standard form for the written communication of information, whether in a paper by a student, a report by an employee, or an article by a professional writer. The other point is that the key to our instruction in composition is the examination we have developed to measure the competence we aim to produce. Without any apologies, we do, as the saying goes, teach to the test. The reason seems obvious enough: we believe that the processes of teaching and evaluating should function as both cause and effect of one another; the components stressed in evaluating writing skills should influence the teaching of them, and what is stressed in teaching the skills should influence evaluating the student's performance.

In social terms, the function of an institution like Chicago State, and of its required program in basic English composition, is to serve as a means of entry to the middle class. Almost all of our students, about 65% of them black and the rest representative of the other ethnic communities of the south and west sides of the city, come from working class families and are the first generation in those families to enter college. While pursuing their studies almost all are employed at part-time or full-time jobs to support themselves and sometimes their families as well. By and large, the aim of these students in investing the time, effort, and money required to get a college degree is entirely practical: they want to qualify for more satisfying and higher paying jobs than those which they presently hold. Such students, perhaps more than others with less pressing needs and concrete ambitions, make one feel accountable as the instructor in a required writing course and the judge of an essential skill.

The very fact that, in spite of the trend of the past decade, our basic writing courses continue to be required of every undergraduate in the university has afforded us the stimulus and opportunity for scholarly and scientific work in the composition area. In our courses it has been possible to address the thinking and writing skills of all our students and, with the evidence of the essay, observe the result of our efforts to help develop those skills. Instead of having to seek data, we are flooded with them.

What is new in our composition program originated in an experiment conducted several years ago. To get some insight into department

grading practices, we had the staff as a whole read a set of ten essays written for a regular composition course examination. Not much to our surprise, the result was a very wide range—the same essays receiving grades all the way from A or B to D or even F. Such inconsistency among ourselves helped to explain why many of our instructors in second term composition sections had been finding that they had to spend most of their time teaching over again skills supposedly covered in the first term, rather than progressing to new levels of performance. Given the discrepancies in our evaluation of student writing, it also became possible to believe that students entering our required composition courses with serious writing problems might be passing on through them with their deficiencies intact. Clearly we had to seek a collective standard of judgment and try to develop some common strategies to help students meet that standard.

Recognizing that we evaluated essays in different ways, but believing that skill in writing is best demonstrated *in* writing, we set out to design an essay examination format that would account for our differences and provide some of the objectivity in observation and measurement usually lacking in such examinations. Over a two year period of research and experimentation we developed a procedure which provides, among other features, a means for computer readable scoring.

Our first step was to construct an observation framework (see Appendix C) based on the theoretical assumption that a whole generates its parts.¹ This framework, which has been re-worked many times, is designed to help the grader categorize the flaws he observes. Lest the reader consider our observation framework itself flawed because we address vices, not virtues, I should explain that there are both practical and theoretical reasons for constructing it as we have. First of all, it should be understood that what the test aims to discriminate is not fine writing but simply a level of basic competence. The practical point is that while each of the virtues in a piece of writing is virtuous in its own way, the vices or flaws are capable of being classified and counted. The theoretical point concerns the relation of whole and parts, a central concept on which our thinking is based. We assume that if there is a

1. Given the thesis that the whole generates its parts, I assume that until the whole has closure the parts lack focus; they are fragmented, unrelated, incoherent. Once the whole has closure, at a deep structural level, a directive formulating step causes the parts to go through a series of transformations to move to surface representations. I do not identify closure, at the deep structural level, in an absolute sense which indicates a polished finish, a pre-knowledge of all parts, but an "almost finish" where one is aware of enough parts to be able to operate with a directed search as one creates.

question about whether a whole exists, the judge who has some idea of what that whole should contain can clearly identify what it doesn't contain—that is, what parts are missing. In the case of the essay, we assume that a missing part causes a block in the communication. We call this block which the grader observes in the communication a flaw in the essay.

Just as our assumptions about language behavior suggest that in writing there must be a conception of the whole before functioning parts can be generated, so we also assume that teachers or graders have a conceptualization of the essay as a whole; therefore, when reading an essay, they expect an integrated whole with meaningful and logical connections in the essay's paragraphs, sentences, and syntactical and phonological structures. If the concept of the essay as a finished product suggests that the essay is made up of integrated parts, then the whole essay should have harmony among its parts. Because breaks in harmony cause blocks in communication, flaws are likely to be a conspicuous feature for the grader. Hence, the flaws are what we count, and the question becomes one of ordering them in a sound and workable manner. (Given this method, of course, the lower the score, the better the writing.)

In our system the grader reveals explicitly what he has observed. When we have these observations from the grader, we use a mathematical model to transform them into measurement units. These units are then translated into an evaluation.

The observation framework falls into four dimensions: (1) organizational coherence of the essay as a whole, (2) coherence within and between paragraphs and sentences, (3) mechanics and usage, and (4) punctuation. These dimensions (detailed in Appendix C) form a hierarchy. The first dimension provides the most global and formal reference to the essay, the fourth the most specific. There is also a qualitative difference between the first dimension and the other three. The first dimension requires the grader to rate the whole essay with respect to the flaws listed. Since this dimension reflects the essay's structural whole, the flaws are such that they can occur only once. The number of errors possible in dimension one is finite. Dimensions two, three, and four, on the other hand, reflect the essay's functioning parts. The flaws represented in these dimensions may occur repeatedly and are, theoretically, infinite.

The framework is a guideline for the grader; it does not insist that he must find the flaws it lists. He is only expected to note, in the appropriate

dimension, the flaws he observes. Printed along the right margin of the essay paper itself are four columns, each corresponding to one of the four dimensions. The grader records each observed flaw by blackening a space in the appropriate column on the same line as the flaw itself.

The grader is expected to read the paper twice: once for the flaws in dimension one and again for flaws in the other three dimensions. After he has recorded the flaws he has observed, he makes a summary recommendation—for placement if the examination is an entrance examination, for Pass or Fail if it is an exit examination. The advantage of listing specific flaws *and* making a holistic judgment is that by graphing the relationships between judgments and flaw counts we are able, each time the examination is given, to establish (i.e., compute) a minimum competence standard which is based not only on the idea individual graders have of what is proper but on what collectively they have in fact recorded while reading the examinations.²

The next step, aimed at strengthening this collective judgment and increasing the reliability of the final results, involves an adjustment of the recorded scores themselves. To insure maximum uniformity, we use the computer and a statistical formula to “calibrate” ourselves as graders. That is, a certain number of flaws, determined by the formula, is added to the scores recorded by reader A, who stands low on a group scale of severity/leniency and a certain number subtracted for reader B, who stands high on that scale. This process, built from the Rasch mathematical model, makes possible the transformation of our observations into measurement units and the translation of these units into an evaluation.

On the basis of the information arrived at through the above procedures a decision (whether in diagnostic or pass/fail terms) is computed. Should an inconsistency emerge, however, between any aspects of the evaluation (for example, between the grader’s summary

2. The procedure for determining this standard—or better, the boundary area between clearly passing and clearly failing scores—involves charting the flaw counts of papers recommended for Pass against those of papers recommended for Fail. For reasons already touched on, we, in fact, compute two boundary scores: one for dimension one and one for the functioning dimension; dimensions two, three and four. To illustrate: suppose that 94 papers have been recommended for Pass and 97 for Fail. The graphs which follow show this procedure. The first graph deals with dimension one. You may observe a set of dimension one flaws. The Pass/Fail or minimum competency boundary for dimension one is determined by the point at which the two lines intersect. The result, in this case, is a boundary between papers with two or fewer dimensions one errors, and papers with three or more. The second graph deals with dimensions two, three and four combined.

recommendation and the numerical scores registered, or between the score for dimension one and that for dimensions two, three, and four), the essay is rechecked before judgment is made. Two further protective measures are also built into our procedure when the examination is used as an exit examination. If the student's instructor disagrees with the grader's observations on an examination paper, he can appeal the grade to a review board. On the other hand, if the instructor does not disagree with the grade but feels that the essay was not up to the student's usual level of performance, he can request that the student be permitted to retake the examination.

The assumption reflected in these procedures is that although we vary among ourselves in our observations and judgments, we are all professionals and, within a predictable range, systematic and consistent within ourselves. The aim was to discover our different systems and, by accounting for them, to approach objectivity in grading essay examinations. Rather than being subjected to the unrealistic and oppressive requirement that each see and judge exactly the same things in exactly the same way as others, we are free to be ourselves as we grade and enabled to learn from our differences as we examine them in retrospect.

Having touched on various features of the examination format and grading procedures, I should mention a point having to do with the subject matter of the essay. My assumption here is that an individual can only appear competent if he is familiar—or at least thinks he is familiar—with the subject about which he is writing. To address this problem, CSU publishes, at the beginning of each term, five possible content areas from which we choose two for the topics on each exam we give. Because all of the students, those enrolled in our classes, those being tutored, and those transferring into the school, have a whole term to become familiar with the general content area, no student is forced to write on a topic of which he is totally ignorant. The five subject areas for this past fall term were:

- College Degrees
- Child Adoption
- Medical Practice
- Government vs Community Control of Schools
- Retirement

The specific topics within these subject areas are formulated as questions. The topic for Composition I is a What or How question:

“What are some characteristics of people working for college degrees?” We assume that the question itself provides the basic outline for the essay: the student will provide a 250 to 300 word answer with a series of examples or illustrations to support his proposition. The Composition II question is in the form of an inverted subject and predicate stated in the subjunctive: “Should there be a mandatory retirement age?” Our expectation here is that the student, responding either affirmatively or negatively, will not only generate a thesis to be both illustrated and explained. He will have to provide the rational relationship between his illustrations and his thesis. This paper should be 450 to 500 words long. (We are still actively researching this area in hopes of greater refinement in formulating topics designed to elicit particular essay responses.)

With the examination format as our control, our program in basic composition is designed to serve every undergraduate in the university. There are three variants of the examination, all with the same format:

1. the *Entrance/Diagnostic Examination*—required of all beginning composition students and administered to:
 - a. all entering freshmen,
 - b. all entering transfer students with 0 hours of composition;
2. the *Exit/Composition I Examination*—required for entry into Composition II and administered to:
 - a. all Composition I students, as the course examination which must be passed in order to get credit for Composition I,
 - b. all entering transfer students with one course in composition, as the examination which must be passed in order to have prior composition credit recognized;
3. the *Exit/Proficiency Examination*— required for admission as a major into any university degree program and administered to:
 - a. all Composition II students, as the course examination which must be passed in order to get credit for Composition II,
 - b. all entering transfer students with two courses in composition, as the examination which must be passed in order to have prior composition credit recognized,
 - c. all students in English 222, a group tutoring course designed principally for transfer students who have failed the Qualifying Examination at entry.

The strength of our examination design is twofold: the student knows the content he will write about and how he will be judged, and the faculty can develop teaching strategies to meet a defined goal. And since the examinations serve both as entry to and exit from our composition

program, they provide a comparative measure of a student's ability before he takes a composition course and after he has completed it.

As a diagnostic exam at entrance, the test enables us to place students in classes best suited to their particular requirements. We have designed three distinct versions of Composition I:

Category 3: those who indicate inability to conceptualize a whole, or create a whole essay, and who therefore cannot generate its parts or see relationships among them. These students will usually also need help with mechanics and usage but will not be ready to function with usage level drills. Prior to anything else, they need work in analysis and organization of total compositions, probably beginning with exercises aimed at recognition and analysis of wholes outside the medium of writing altogether and progressing to parallel processes of composition in the essay, starting with the simple narrative.

Typical Category 3 student score on Diagnostic Exam:

Dimension 1: = 6 errors Dimension 2, 3, & 4 = 24 errors
(See Essay Sample One)

Category 2: those who can almost create a whole composition but don't relate all of the parts to the whole. These students have surface level problems and some problems with meaning, but they can deal with meaning relationships and hence can identify surface relationships and create new structural relationships. They can also investigate simple essay forms to create essay patterns or use simple essay patterns to organize their own essays and then compare the process of organizing the essay to the process of composing paragraphs and sentences. They can also identify differences in the surface representation of different essay forms or sentence parts.

Typical Category 2 student score on Diagnostic Exam:

Dimension 1: 3 errors Dimensions 2, 3, & 4: 21 errors

Category 1: those who are competent or nearly competent in the simple essay form. These students may have some usage and mechanical problems and some organization problems, but they are what we would consider the typical entering freshman. They should be able to correct surface writing problems if given clear structural definitions or guidelines. They should investigate essays to see how ideas are developed by rhetorical patterns and then be able to expand the patterns. They should also identify simple sentence and paragraph structures and be led to compose more complex structures.

Typical Category 1 student score on Diagnostic Exam:

Dimension 1: 1 error Dimensions 2, 3, & 4: 19 errors

There is also a class of students who are beyond simple competence. Probably using a thematic text, they should be able to explore ideas, work with the variety of ways (and the strategic reasons for them) of making similar statements, and/or embark on an analysis of styles aimed at developing style(s) of their own.

Obviously, one result of our Composition I "tracking" is that students in the more remedial classes, though exposed to some elements common to all sections, are less likely than the others to meet the requirements for passing the course the first time through. An Incomplete grade is entered for a student who has faithfully done the work in any basic composition course but failed the course examination. A student with an Incomplete may either be assigned to a tutor for assistance in preparing to re-take the examination or, more normally, be directed to re-enroll in the course, usually in a more advanced category.

A further result of this procedure, we hope, is an increased likelihood that both students and instructors will feel a sense of progress: returning, if necessary, to first principles in our teaching, we start somewhere and go somewhere. One evidence that such progress is occurring is the avowal by various Composition II instructors of their increasing ability to build on skills developed in Composition I rather than having simply to repeat the effort to develop them in the first place. The student, on the other hand, enabled to analyze and compare his own respective performances, can chart his progress not only by comparison with his peers or with a national norm which does not necessarily reflect him but by a comparison with himself. He is able to see, for example, that even though he has not yet met the Composition I passing score of 2-15, he is better with his current score of 0-24 than he was with his entering score of 6-26. And when he sees that he is making progress, he may be encouraged to feel that he can, with the help of his instructor, find some system in his problems that will help him to solve them systematically.

We have tried to define as precisely as possible for ourselves and for the students the skills we expect to be developed in basic composition. The general objective, wholly unoriginal, is that students who have completed both Composition I and Composition II should be able to write coherent, unified, and organized expository essays free from serious mechanical errors. Though some components of the course work have more ambitious designs, it is this sound and modest standard that a student must meet to pass his composition requirement. The essay model toward which we teach follows:

THE EXPOSITORY ESSAY HAS:

I. AN INTRODUCTION WHICH

- A. has a stated or implied proposition; that is, a statement with which the reader may agree or disagree (what)
- B. includes one or both of the following
 - 1. the proposition placed in an overall context (why)
 - 2. an implication of how the proposition is to be developed (how)

II. A BODY WHICH

- A. is logically organized
- B. has statements which are
 - 1. relevant to the proposition
 - 2. relevant to one another
 - 3. developed with specific details

III. A CONCLUSION WHICH

- A. restates (not repeats) the generating proposition
- B. does not have information irrelevant or contradictory to the introduction or the body.

This model generates an essay of at least four well developed paragraphs: e.g. Paragraph one: Introduction, Paragraphs two and three: Body, and Paragraph four: Conclusion. It can, and usually does, accommodate more than the simplest four-paragraph design; it can also accommodate an expansion of this deductive model for the more sophisticated inductive model: An introduction which only implies the proposition; a body developed with an analogy; a conclusion which finally and definitely states (not restates) the proposition.

We have found these distinct advantages in teaching to our test:

- 1. It provides detailed feedback understandable to the student.
- 2. It provides the student with scores which demonstrate his progress.
- 3. It can diagnose specific problems so that we can identify both the remedial and non-remedial students and develop a system to place them in classes which will address their needs.
- 4. It generates data about our students which we can use for further research.
- 5. It does not impose an arbitrary outside set of standards on the grader; it makes the grader's particular observations and judgment central to the process of evaluation.
- 6. It allows the development of a departmental consensus on grading standards, a consensus based on the practical working judgment of the graders.

Despite the humanistic antipathy generated by competency based learning, we have found it productive to teach to our test. Even though a testing format can be limited by the skill and imagination of those who employ it, it provides us with a rigor too often lacking in composition programs. The approach is mainly a refined self-conscious application of what most good teachers have practiced willy-nilly. By systematizing the criteria for students and calibrating graders, we have systematized our common sense. The difference between willy-nilly common sense and a systematized approach lies in stating our expectations about what we are to teach and what students are to learn and then devising a means to measure the performance of those expectations.

As a response to humanistic antipathy we can only ask questions: If there are valuable writing performances which cannot be defined and therefore measured, should we not still insist upon identifying and measuring those that can be and finding better ways to teach them? As we isolate performances which resist precise statement and measurement, may we not, even so, find better ways to state, measure, and teach them? Attempting to answer these questions helps us do another thing universities are supposed to do—research.

General Note: Readers interested in the theories of language and mathematics involved in this procedure may consult Rosemary Hake and David Andrich: *The Ubiquitous Essay: A Discourse and Psychometric Model to Identify, Measure, Evaluate and Teach Essay Writing Ability*, 1975 (unpublished research monograph). Copies are available from Chicago State University or the University of Western Australia.

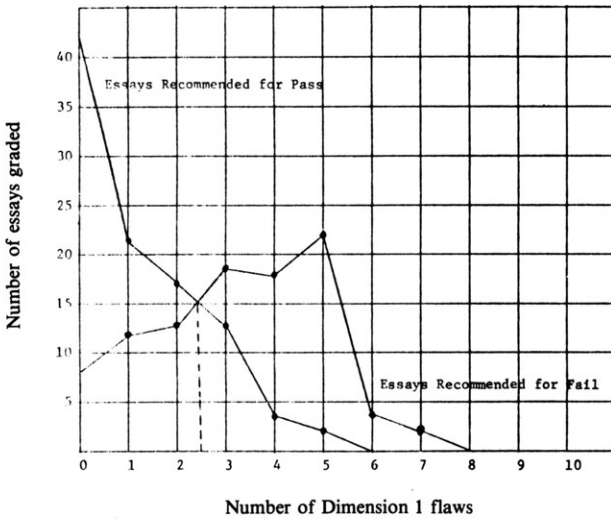


Figure 1: Graph of method for computing allowable number of Dim. 1 flaws

The same procedure is followed to determine the error limits in the functioning dimensions (two, three, and four counted together). If the intersection occurs, say, at 13 errors, the boundary with respect to dimensions two, three, and four will be between papers with 12 or fewer errors and papers with 14 or more.

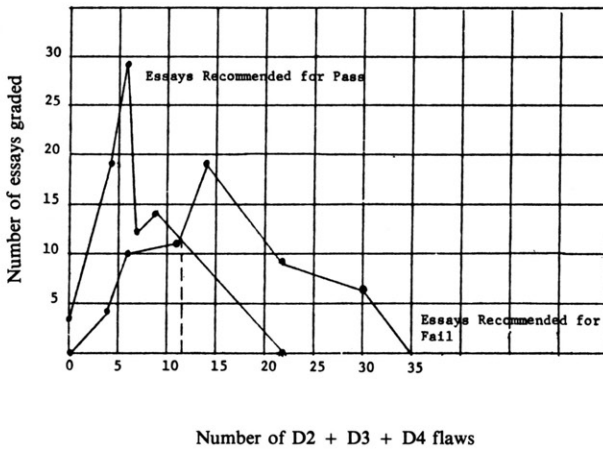


Figure 2: Graph of method for computing allowable number of functioning dimension flaws

APPENDIX A

EXIT: COMPOSITION I EXAM—ESSAY SAMPLE TWO

Pornography

There would be several effects if a pornography shop was in a neighborhood. First, if a pornography shop was in a neighborhood it would lower the credentials of the people in the neighborhood. Second, it would be harder for the parents to control their children. Third, if a pornography shop was in a neighborhood some people might not live there.

If a pornography shop was in a neighborhood it would lower the credentials of the people living in the neighborhood. This neighborhood could have been a very good neighborhood, and the people living in it might have been very respectable people, but in the presence of a pornography shop would change that right quick. Other neighborhoods would get a wrong impression about these people now, and wouldn't associate with them. The presence of a pornography shop in a neighborhood would effect their social standing, who would want them to elect anyone for office. They couldn't run for anything and get elected because the pornography shop would be the cause of it. If these people don't get together and set their pornography shop out of their neighborhoods, they would never get by in good social standings with other neighborhoods.

The presence of a pornography shop in the neighborhood would make it hard for the parents to keep their children away from there. The children would go wild knowing there's a pornography shop just around the corner. They would be hanging around the shop all day trying to see what they can see, or waiting for someone old enough to buy a pornographic book so they can get him to buy one for them. Now what can the parents say to their children when they find them hanging around the pornography shop. They may be upset, they get angry, they may even beat the children on punishment, but this won't stop most children especially if they think they can get away with it.

The presence of a pornography shop in the neighborhood would upset so many people that they may not want to live there. When people invest in a home, they usually invest in one they find they like or in a nice

neighborhood. The presence of a pornography shop would upset them so, but they're willing to fight it first. If all they tried failed, these people will move out. I mean who wants to live in a neighborhood with a pornography shop right on the same block. These people respect themselves enough not to be humiliated by a place like that.

Pornography is not dirty but there is a certain place they could be sold, and a neighborhood is not the place.

EXIT: COMPOSITION I EXAM—ESSAY SAMPLE THREE

CSU An Asset To Society

When I first arrived at CSU, I looked over the listing of prospective majors that they had to offer. In comparing it with that of other schools, I found that CS.U. was lacking some opportunities that others had to offer. Nowhere on CSU's listing did I see course offerings for doctors or dentists. It confused me, and I have wondered about it since then.

If CSU expanded its horizons by offering more majors to their students, then people would appreciate the school more. In fact, the reason why most high school graduates go away from home to attend school is because they can't find what they want here in the city.

Another reason why there should be more offerings is that everyone has to go elsewhere for their educations, then that shows very little for CSU as a college. Other high school graduates may feel that CSU. will eventually be a low rated school, causing them to go other places.

It is my opinion that CSU is a good school. However, if they want to improve their images in the surrounding community, I feel that they should expand their horizons by adding more major offerings to their listings. Chicagoans would appreciate it very much. People from out of town, state & even country would look at CSU another way too. CSU would then certainly become a better asset to society.

APPENDIX B

On each printout, the circled entry is the score of the student whose essays you have reviewed in this article.

Keep in mind this scheme as you see his progressive scores:

ENTRANCE DIAGNOSTIC EXAM	400 to 500 words
EXIST COMPOSITION ONE EXAM	200 to 300 words
EXIT COMPOSITION TWO/ PROFICIENCY EXAM	400 to 500 words

Keep in mind also our assumption that the greater the number of errors, the less competently the essay was written.

Social Security	Name	Def Wtd	Dim No	Fun Adj	Dim No	Def and Joint	Fun Decsn	Grader Codf	Recom	Gder and Joint	Dim Decsn	Final Decsm
-----------------	------	---------	--------	---------	--------	---------------	-----------	-------------	-------	----------------	-----------	-------------

Entrance: Diagnostic Exam—Essay Sample One

OBS	8	28	9	6	24			37	3			1 2 3
-----	---	----	---	---	----	--	--	----	---	--	--	-------

Exit: Composition I Exam—Essay Sample Two

				0	24		Anom	Chek	23	Fail		F
OBS	11	10	5									
ADJ	13	4	5									

Exit: Composition I Exam—Essay Sample Three

				0	10		Comp	Pass	37	Pass		Pass
OBS	3	4	1									
ADJ	5	3	1									

Exit: Composition II/Proficiency Exam—Essay Sample Four

				0	11		Comp	Pass	37	Pass		Pass
OBS	2	4	4									
ADJ	3	3	5									

APPENDIX C

The four dimensional framework which follows is just that—a framework for measuring the rudimentary competence of essays. The framework reflects the basic essay model and assumes the use of standard American written English. It does not imply that this is the only possible model but the basic model. The model and its dimensions are used to provide a means for a relatively systematic and specific recording of what a judge perceives as flaws in the report. As you will note, the whole framework is built on the principle of inclusion and exclusion or omission. Namely, the essay, paragraph, sentence or even word does not have something it should have or has something it should not have.

DIMENSION ONE

FLAW IDENTIFICATION 1-12

The Essay as a Whole: Logic, Organization, Development

The essay is flawed because

1. it does not address the question and is ineligible for grading -10
2. it has no introduction -3

3. it has a faulty introduction which does not imply or state the proposition -2
4. it has a faulty introduction which does not place the proposition in an overall context or imply how the proposition is to be developed -1
5. it has no body -5
6. it has a faulty body which is illogically organized -2
7. it has a faulty body which has statements irrelevant to the proposition -1
8. it has a faulty body which has statements not related to one another -1
9. it has statements which are not developed with specific details -1
10. it has no conclusion -2
11. it has a faulty conclusion which does not restate the generating proposition -1
12. it has a faulty conclusion which includes information irrelevant or contradictory to the introduction or body -1

DIMENSION TWO

FLAW IDENTIFICATION 13-23

Meaning and Style

The essay's meaning or style is flawed because

- I. it has faulty paragraphing in the essay when
 13. a necessary paragraph is omitted
 14. an unclear, repetitious, irrelevant, misplaced, factually incorrect or illogical paragraph is included
 15. a paragraph should/should not commence
- II. it has faulty structuring in its paragraphs when
 16. a necessary sentence is omitted
 17. an unclear, repetitious, irrelevant, misplaced, factually incorrect or illogical sentence is included
 18. the paragraph is lacking necessary details
- III. it has faulty phrasing in its sentences when
 19. a necessary element (word or word grouping) is omitted
 20. an unclear, incorrect, inconsistent, irrelevant, redundant, misplaced, dangling or unparallelled element is included
 21. the sentence lacks necessary details
- IV. it has faulty sentence construction when
 22. there is a run-on
 23. there is a fragment

DIMENSION THREE

FLAW IDENTIFICATION 24-39

Usage

The essay's usage flaws include

- I. Verb usage
 24. improper subject/verb agreement
 25. verb phrase omitting a verb form
 26. incorrect verb ending or verb form
 27. an inconsistent tense, mood, or voice
- II. Pronoun usage
 28. no antecedent for a pronoun
 29. pronoun not agreeing with its antecedent
 30. pronoun in incorrect case form
- III. Noun usage
 31. incorrect plural form
 32. no plural form
 33. incorrect possessive form
 34. no possessive form
- IV. Adjective usage
 35. incorrect comparative or superlative form
 36. no comparative or superlative form
 37. adjective instead of adverb or vice versa

Word usage

38. misspelled
39. misused

DIMENSION FOUR

FLAW IDENTIFICATION 40-51

Punctuation

The error has been made by the omission or incorrect usage of the following:

40. Capital letters
41. Period (unless the period creates a sentence fragment marked in Dimension II)
42. Question mark
43. Exclamation point

44. Comma (unless the comma creates a comma splice marked in Dimension II)
45. Colon
46. Quotation marks
47. Dash
48. Underlining
49. Hyphen
50. Parentheses
51. Apostrophe