



THE RHETORIC AND
WRITING PROGRAM

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

BOX 830688 JO31 RICHARDSON, TEXAS 75083-0688
(972) 883-6340 OR (972) 883-2018

Report on Writing Assessment at The University of Texas at Dallas Year 2002

I. Process of Assessment:

Our writing assessment is based upon a random sampling of Rhetoric 1302 student portfolios completed in Spring 2002 using the web-based application called the Learning Record Online (LRO), developed and maintained by project director Peg Syverson of the UT-Austin Division of Rhetoric and Composition (also Director of the Computer Writing and Research Lab at UT). (See Appendix C of this report for more information on the LRO.) On May 13, 2002, the assessment was conducted in three phases. In Phase 1 we conducted a brief calibration workshop for the readers, during which the holistic rubric was demonstrated on sample portfolios (see Appendix A for the components used to create the rubric and Appendix B for the rubric). Phase 2 involved the reading and ranking of the portfolios. A random sampling of portfolios from all sections of Rhetoric 1302 offered in the spring semester was selected. A total of 34 portfolios were read (representing about 10% of all students passing the course in all sections during Spring 2002). Two readers read each portfolio. Phase 3 involved third readings of portfolios where there was a discrepancy of more than 3 total points between the 2 readers' rankings. The assessment team leader (Director of Rhetoric and Writing) acted as the third reader. Assessment readers are graduate teaching assistants who teach Rhetoric 1302. It is our view that the readers conducting a holistic assessment of the portfolios are trained in the teaching of the course and have explicit knowledge of the context in which all writing/learning being assessed has been taught.

II. Results of the Assessment, by objective

Portfolios were ranked in the five areas of competency below (See Appendix B for the rubric and details on how it is tied to the THECB outcomes) with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

- 1: Competencies not evident
- 2: Competencies rarely evident
- 3: Competencies sometimes evident
- 4: Competencies frequently evident
- 5: Competencies extensively evident

Rhetorical Knowledge
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing
Collaboration
Research and Processes
Technology

We established that a benchmark percentage of 75% of the portfolios ranked at 4 or higher indicates an acceptable level of overall competence in communication skills (as outlined in the THECB outcomes), as well as competence in each of the five categories we assessed. This benchmark percentage is based on two factors: what we know about our incoming freshmen and what we know about our Rhetoric program. We know that U.T. Dallas freshmen are among the top percentages of their high school graduating classes and that their average SAT scores are exceptionally high. According to admissions standards described in the current catalog, "[t]he achievement levels of students admitted to U.T. Dallas are illustrated by the following statistical profile of the entering freshman class of Fall 1999.

61% of students were in the top 25% of their high school graduating class; 29% were in the top 10% of their class; 50% of students scored between 1090 and 1300 on the SAT-I; 26% scored 1300 or higher (the 1998 national average SAT-I is 1017)." (Source: U.T. Dallas 2000-2002 Catalog; <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/admissions/catalog/>)

We also know that our Rhetoric program produces excellent teachers. We have an integrated graduate and undergraduate curriculum wherein graduate teaching assistants are required to take two 3-hr credit graduate seminars in Composition Pedagogy and Rhetorical Theories before and during their first teaching assignment of Rhetoric 1302. Recent Arts & Humanities Master's and PhD graduates who have undergone this training and obtained invaluable teaching experience have gone on to receive full-time tenure-track positions such as Director of Composition at University of Scranton (hired ABD), Assistant Professor of English at Bethany College (hired ABD), Assistant Professor of English at Pacific University, and Assistant Professor of English at New Jersey City University (hired ABD). Other recent positions obtained are Senior Lecturer at Southern Methodist University (hired ABD) full-time English Faculty position at Collin County Community College (hired ABD), Instructor at the Art Institute of Dallas, to name a few. One recent Master's graduate, who taught Rhetoric 1302, was recently accepted to the new Science Writing PhD program at M.I.T. in Boston. In addition, all of our Rhetoric 1302 classes are taught in computer-networked classrooms. Thus, students and instructors learn to utilize the most cutting edge equipment and software for achieving the learning outcomes we set forth for our program.

Given these two key factors, the positive results of our first program-level writing assessment are not surprising. Results for the scores are given below:

Number of portfolios sampled: **34**

Number of portfolios with scores of 4 or above: **31**

Number of portfolios with scores of below 4: **3**

Percentage of portfolios with scores of 4 or above: 91%

Breakdown of overall total portfolio scores into the 5 rankings:

1: Competencies not evident	0
2: Competencies rarely evident	1
3: Competencies sometimes evident	2
4: Competencies frequently evident	14
5: Competencies extensively evident	17

Breakdown of the 5 areas assessed of those ranked at 4 or above (by percentage):

Rhetorical Knowledge	76%
Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing	76%
Collaboration	65%
Research and Processes	64%
Technology	58%

While we feel that the results exceeded our expectations, we do believe these results can help us improve our program significantly, especially in the areas of collaboration, research, and technology. The next section of this report details our plans for improvement and our recommendations for new resources with which to implement our plans.

III. The Uses of the Results

Now that we have a more detailed picture of the communication competencies of our freshman writers, we can formulate a more comprehensive vision of a writing program that is not only sound, but progressive—a vision that brings what we have been doing and what we recently learned in the assessment to bear on our strategic plans for the future. It makes sense, then, to describe our vision in terms of the past, present, and future of the U.T. Dallas Rhetoric and Writing program.

PAST

In the early 1990s, when U.T. Dallas first became a four-year institution and began admitting freshmen and sophomores, the incoming new freshman class was relatively small, around 350 students. As a result, from the beginning we have been committed to maintaining small class sizes in order to most effectively teach rhetoric and writing. According to the National Council of Teachers of English, “No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.” (<http://www.ncte.org/positions/class-size-college.shtml>). In addition, we have set the maximum teaching load of the instructors at 2-1, which is consistent with national standards for graduate teaching assistant teaching loads. This year we have a record number of freshmen (around 1200), and the exponential growth each year has put a strain on our resources that in past years seemed sufficient. Training of our Rhetoric

TA's has been the highest priority of the Director of Rhetoric and Writing, and assessment has always played a crucial role in their training. For example, each year a sample of student papers is used in a grading workshop conducted each semester (both in the graduate theory and practice training seminar offered every spring and in the Rhetoric Practicum graduate course every fall (HUSL 7331 and HUSL 7334). These course syllabi are maintained as websites (<http://lingua.utdallas.edu/rhetoric/7331.html>, <http://lingua.utdallas.edu/rhetoric/practicum.html>). During these workshops, and throughout the year, the team of Rhetoric 1302 instructors work diligently on the relation of assessment to pedagogy in order to improve our teaching (and thus, most importantly, the learning of our students) and to further their professional development as graduate students. TA instructors are also provided with position statements on writing assessment from our professional associations, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC; <http://www.ncte.org/positions/assessment.html>), and the WPA (Writing Program Administrators) Outcomes statement for first-year composition (<http://www.cas.jlstu.edu/English/Hesse/outcomes.html>). Both links are on the HUSL 7331 course website. Among the discussion topics are comparisons of different evaluation methods, the implications of those methods (such as why timed composition tests are not reliable indicators of writing competence), and new methods being tested. We have always stressed that any assessment of writing should be tied to LEARNING as opposed to TEACHING so that the focus is on making sure our students are learning to improve their writing, rather than on whether they are making better grades. Student evaluations are consulted to gauge how our TA's are doing, as well as in-class observations of their teaching, the results of which are taken into consideration as the training seminars are planned each year. TA's also write their own self-evaluations in order to have them reflect on their teaching strengths and weaknesses.

PRESENT

This past year, we added to those ongoing best practices in the following ways. To support the growing number of incoming freshmen, we have consistently offered more sections of Rhetoric 1302 each year. Thus, we have been able to offer graduate teaching assistantships in Rhetoric to 20 graduate students per semester, up from the half a dozen we employed in the early 90s. The training and supervision of these TA's has always been the responsibility of the Director of Rhetoric and Writing. This year we have hired two new Assistant Directors of Rhetoric and Writing at the rank of Senior Lecturers (PhD required). They are responsible for teaching a 3-3 load each year, (maximum of 120 total students per academic year) as well as assisting the Director with technology maintenance and training, pedagogy training and resources, and plans for future improvements to the program. The surge in freshmen growth has also affected the classroom spaces in which we teach. To match the growth, we have added 2 computer-networked Rhetoric classrooms to the 1 that we began with in 1991.

This past year, as a result of the system-wide assessment mandate, we piloted a new assessment instrument called the Learning Record Online, a web-based electronic writing portfolio application. In August, 2001, the developer of the Learning Record Online (LRO), Peg Syverson (UT-Austin Division of Rhetoric and Composition), conducted a

day-long workshop on implementing this new portfolio system of writing assessment into our Rhetoric 1302 program. The orientation was a mixture of discussion about the assessment model and how to integrate it into our curriculum and hands-on practice with the database system. There have been the inevitable glitches in the technology since it is in beta testing phase, but overall we are extremely pleased with the program and plan to continue using it. The LRO system is easy to use for TA's and students. The server is maintained at UT-Austin by Dr. Syverson and her team. At this time there is no charge to use it, although they are developing a business model, after which there will be a minimal charge that pays for the tech support and maintenance. The U.T. Dallas administration has generously supported the development of the LRO pilot project with a one-time payment of \$5000.

FUTURE

As a result of our first writing program assessment, the following measures have been, or are in the process of, being implemented:

- We will continue to maintain a maximum class size of 15-20 students.
- We will continue to set the teaching load of TA's at 2-1 (maximum of 50 students per academic year) and Senior Lecturers (Assistant Directors of Rhetoric and Writing) at 3-3 (maximum of 120 students per academic year).
- We will revamp our TA training in response to the need for improvement in the areas of *collaboration, research, and technology*. Group projects will figure more prominently, as well as additional training in teaching techniques for collaborative research. New electronic resources for teaching students research methods have been added this year to textbooks used in the course, both the main textbook on argumentative writing and the grammar and style handbook (at no extra charge to the student). The addition this year of an Assistant Director of Rhetoric and Writing responsible for Technology strengthens our ability to train the instructors as well as the students on the computer equipment and software utilized in Rhetoric 1302. New computers for all rhetoric classrooms and instructor offices have been ordered and are scheduled for installation in December, 2002. The Assistant Director of Rhetoric and Writing responsible for Training and Research strengthens our ability to provide superior training methods and material resources, in addition to strengthening our commitment to integrating the latest research in rhetoric and composition in our training curriculum.
- We will revamp the timing of training seminars to integrate TA training more appropriately with teaching schedules. We plan to reschedule the spring training and fall practicum courses by creating a late summer course followed immediately by the practicum course in the fall.
- We have adopted the newest editions of both of the required textbooks for Rhetoric 1302. The editors of the newest edition of the main textbook, *The Aims*

of Argument, consulted with the U.T. Dallas Director of Rhetoric and Writing last year on the updated manuscript for the text, and recommended changes that we felt would significantly improve the text were made in response to our review of the book.

- We have revamped the course structure as a result of implementing the Learning Record Online portfolio method of assessment. We now include more variety of writing assignments, more time spent on major writing projects, more time for in-class writing, more emphasis on online resources, more teacher-student conferencing time, and more teacher feedback on individual assignments.
- We are in the process of placing all training resources on a revamped Rhetoric program website for easier access and in advance of actual training.

The following are recommendations for additional measures needed to improve the overall rhetoric and writing instruction at U.T. Dallas:

- We need to revamp the lower division writing curriculum to reflect the rapid growth in the freshmen class as well as the changing demographics of our students. This will require additional classroom space, computer equipment, and funding for TA's to teach Rhetoric 1300 (a much-needed course in ESL and developmental writers).
- We also recommend a campus-wide faculty involvement in discussion aimed toward revamping the required writing curriculum. One scenario that we might entertain is the possible addition of a required sophomore Rhetoric course that focuses on 'writing in the disciplines.' Currently the U.T. Dallas core writing curriculum requires students to take an additional 3-hour writing course at the upper division level in their major discipline. We believe that should be supplemented by a sophomore level prerequisite course offered in the School of Arts & Humanities. This would also reflect the recent recognition that transfer students have little writing instruction prior to their final semesters (although the recent addition of the new Professional Communication program for computer science and engineering students has ameliorated this problem significantly). Other scenarios would no doubt be introduced, but the goal is to take a serious look at the writing curriculum.
- We strongly recommend the creation of a dedicated campus Writing Center that supplements the writing instruction in all schools. The current level of writing tutoring available to students is inadequate for their needs. Most major universities across the country have a Writing Center, and we feel the need for this center at U.T. Dallas has never been more acute.
- We recommend a permanent means of funding to pay instructors to conduct the annual year-end writing assessment, as well as to pay for the eventual costs of the assessment instrument itself (outlined in Part II, Present, section of this report).

We also recommend the following maxims to consider as we go about implementing our recommendations and as we continue to seek ways of improving the writing instruction at U.T. Dallas:

- We need to insure that our assessment does not hinder learning in any way.
- We need to ask growth questions in qualitative terms.
- We need to look for outcomes of assessment that are significantly different and educationally significant, in addition to using local outcomes alongside system outcomes.
- We need to look at low end and high end writing samples so that it magnifies the differences more than looking at the middle quality writing samples.
- We need to include any reporting for SACS that could also be used in our assessment plans and reports, as well as similar information gained during any departmental self-studies.
- We need to involve faculty at all levels of curriculum planning, instructor training, and assessment.
- We need to include in our reporting mechanism position statements on current rhetoric and composition research and best practices that will have a direct bearing on the competencies that our writing assessment seeks to measure, and then translate those to administrators, regents, and legislators.
- We need to remind our administrators and our regents that “what is easiest to measure may correspond least to good writing” (CCCC position statement).

Appendix A

Assessment Rubric Components

A. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 'Communication' Outcomes

B. Rhetoric 1302 Course Strands

C. Writing Program Administrators Outcomes for First-year Composition

A. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) Outcomes:

COMMUNICATION (composition, speech, modern language)

The objective of a communication component of a core curriculum is to enable the student to communicate effectively in clear and correct prose in a style appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.

Exemplary Educational Objectives:

1. To understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation.
2. To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.
3. To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written, visual, and oral communication.
4. To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
5. To understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.
6. To develop the ability to research and write a documented paper and/or to give an oral presentation.

B. Rhetoric 1302 – 5 Course Strands:

1. Rhetoric - Rhetoric, where we will explore the uses of rhetoric in constructing place, activity, persona, and audience, in addition to arguing to inquire, convince, persuade, and negotiate/mediate. This strand also encompasses style, grammar, punctuation, and format conventions.

2. Information and Technology -- Information and technology, where we will explore recently developed technologies for research, composing, and communication.

3. Research -- Research, where we will use a wide variety of conventional and online search strategies to gather information about a topic.

4. Collaboration -- Collaboration, where we will gain experience working with others to achieve a common goal.

5. Critical Thinking -- Critical thinking is the analysis of any attempt at persuasion, based on an evaluation of the form and content of that attempt. Thinking critically is a strategy for determining how to persuade others, and whether to be persuaded ourselves. To these ends, we will pay particular attention to cultural and individual assumptions, to evidence and other types of support, to arguments and fallacies, and to rhetoric and language.

C: WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

Adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), April 2000

For further information about the development of the Outcomes Statement, please see
<http://www.mwsc.edu/~outcomes/>

For further information about the Council of Writing Program Administrators, please see
<http://www.cas.ilstu.edu/english/hesse/wpawelcome.htm>

A version of this statement was published in
WPA: Writing Program Administration 23.1/2 (fall/winter 1999): 59-66

Introduction

This statement describes the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by first-year composition programs in American postsecondary education. To some extent, we seek to regularize what can be expected to be taught in first-year composition; to this end the document is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, the following statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. This document intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards should be left to specific institutions or specific groups of institutions.

Learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and informed guidance. Therefore, it is important that teachers, administrators, and a concerned public do not imagine that these outcomes can be taught in reduced or simple ways. Helping students demonstrate these outcomes requires expert understanding of how students actually learn to write. For this reason we expect the primary audience for this document to be well-prepared college writing teachers and college writing program administrators. In some places, we have chosen to write in their professional language. Among such readers, terms such as "rhetorical" and "genre" convey a rich meaning that is not easily simplified. While we have also aimed at writing a document that the general public can understand, in limited cases we have aimed first at communicating effectively with expert writing teachers and writing program administrators.

These statements describe only what we expect to find at the end of first-year composition, at most schools a required general education course or sequence of courses. As writers move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, students' abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. For this reason, each statement of outcomes for first-year composition is followed by suggestions for further work that builds on these outcomes.

Rhetorical Knowledge

By the end of first year composition, students should

- * Focus on a purpose
- * Respond to the needs of different audiences
- * Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- * Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- * Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- * Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- * Write in several genres

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- * The main features of writing in their fields
- * The main uses of writing in their fields
- * The expectations of readers in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

By the end of first year composition, students should

- * Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- * Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- * Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- * Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- * The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- * The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- * The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields

Processes

By the end of first year composition, students should

- * Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- * Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- * Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work

- * Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- * Learn to critique their own and others' works
- * Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- * Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- * To build final results in stages
- * To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
- * To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
- * To apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first year composition, students should

- * Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- * Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- * Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- * Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- * The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
- * Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved

Appendix B

Holistic Assessment Rubric for First-Year Rhetoric 1302 Portfolios* **University of Texas at Dallas**

Portfolios will be ranked in the five areas of competency below with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

- 1: Competencies not evident**
- 2: Competencies rarely evident**
- 3: Competencies sometimes evident**
- 4: Competencies frequently evident**
- 5: Competencies extensively evident**

Rhetorical Knowledge: By the end of first year rhetoric, students should

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Understand how to construct effective arguments of various types (inquiring, convincing, persuading, negotiating, mediating)
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Note: the above criteria both underscore and build upon the following HECB competencies:

- Understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices
- Understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, ie, descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written...communication.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: By the end of first year rhetoric, students should

- Use writing and reading for analyzing both form and content of arguments
- Understand how arguments persuade others and ourselves
- Use argumentative analyses to examine cultural and individual assumptions
- Construct effective arguments that sufficiently support claims

Note: the above criteria both underscore and build upon the following HECB competencies:

- Understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.

Collaboration: By the end of first-year rhetoric, students should

- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Work with other students to achieve a common goal
- Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- Analyze peer portfolios and respond with constructive feedback
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others

Note: the above criteria both underscore and build upon the following HECB competencies:

- Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.

Research and Processes: By the end of first year rhetoric, students should

- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work

Note: the above criteria both underscore and build upon the following HECB competencies:

- Understand and demonstrate writing...processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing and presentation
- Develop the ability to research and write a documented paper

Technology: By the end of first year rhetoric, students should

- Learn common formats for different kinds of electronic texts
- Develop knowledge of various writing applications
- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

*Based on the *Learning Record Online* five course strands, with correspondence to THECB outcomes noted where applicable; rubric structure and some verbiage patterned after University of Texas at Tyler holistic assessment rubric elements (which are based on the *WPA Outcomes*)

APPENDIX C
The Learning Record Online
Instructor's Manual

I. Introduction to the Learning Record

The Learning Record is primarily a document that enables teachers and students to observe a student's learning process over the course of a semester. Based on humane but rigorous and responsible principles (see Appendix I), its methods of investigation and inquiry about learning follow sound practices that have grounded research across many disciplines, from biology to economics to anthropology to composition:

- Observations of phenomena we wish to understand, over time and under diverse conditions.
- Gathering diverse kinds of data from phenomena over time.
- Interpretations based on these observations and data samples.
- Public reporting for confirmation or challenge by peers investigating similar phenomena.

The Learning Record Online Web Site is based on an eight-page document (see Appendix A) which provides a convenient format for gathering information about the student's development in reading, writing, researching, and technology from diverse sources over the course of the semester. These sources include a student's interviews with parents, caregivers, or prior teachers, self reflection, observations of their own work, and an evaluative argument assessing how their learning has progressed throughout the semester. The format does not dictate the kinds of activities or products to be included; instead, students may include a wide variety of different kinds of materials, observations, and interpretations – anything they feel illustrates their learning process. The Learning Record is a public document: it is made available to students, instructors, researchers, administrators and anyone who has an interest in the student's literacy development.

The only "rule" for using the Record – and the one which is most difficult to become comfortable with – is that teachers *must* consider students' final letter grades based on what students demonstrate they know and can do, rather than reporting assumptions about the students' deficits. The rule comes from an obvious fact of observation: we cannot observe what isn't there, only what *is* there. When we talk about what students don't know or can't do, we are speculating, not observing. The Learning Record model is based on students' development, not their presumed deficits. This simple rule has had the effect of qualitatively and globally changing the ecology of instruction and evaluation in ways that support student learning. One of the main features of that change is that students are not given letter grades on each individual paper or assignment they hand in; the only letter grades students receive are at the Midterm and the Final (grade levels are defined below). Instead, teachers individually track levels of quantity and quality based on a theory of small multiples (see Appendix G), and return to the student comments that focus on what the student might be able to do to improve their writing, for example, in the next assignment.

Course Strands and Dimensions of Learning

The key to interpreting and assessing student literacy development lies in the use of strands of work – rhetoric, research, technology, and collaboration – and scales which describe activities

we typically see as stages students move through in their development as readers, writers, and users of technology. These scales are not rubrics which describe some mythical ideal at the high end and progressively greater deficits as the scale descends. Rather, they describe observable features of development in which each stage represents positive growth based on five interdependent dimensions of learning: confidence and independence; mastery of skills and strategies; use of prior and emerging experience; knowledge of content matter; and critical reflection. The materials gathered in the Learning Record provide evidence in support of the teacher's assessment of the student's argument about their learning within these dimensions.

Learning occurs across complex dimensions which are interrelated and interdependent. Learning theorists have argued that learning and development is not an assembly-line which can be broken down into discrete steps occurring with machine-time precision, but an organic process that unfolds along a continuum according to its own pace and rhythm. Within the Learning Record process, the teacher and student are actively searching for, and documenting, positive evidence of student development across the five dimensions. These five dimensions cannot be "separated out" and treated individually; they are dynamically interwoven and interdependent, and learners should expect to make progress across each. What follows is a more detailed description of the five dimensions of learning:

Confidence and Independence

Confidence and independence in our own reading, writing, and thinking abilities. We see growth and development when learners' confidence and independence become coordinated with their actual abilities and skills, content knowledge, use of experience, and reflectiveness about their own learning. It is not a simple case of "more (confidence and independence) is better." The overconfident student who has relied on faulty or underdeveloped skills and strategies learns to ask for help when facing an obstacle; the shy student begins to trust her own abilities and begins to work alone at times, or to insist on presenting her own point of view in discussion. In both cases, students develop along the dimension of confidence and independence.

Skills and Strategies

Specific skills and strategies involved in composing and communicating effectively, from concept to organization to polishing grammar and correctness, and including technological skills for computer communication. Skills and strategies represent the "know-how" aspect of learning. When we speak of "performance" or "mastery," we generally mean that learners have developed skills and strategies to function successfully in certain situations

Knowledge and Understanding

Knowledge and understanding refers to the "content" knowledge gained about new technologies, rhetoric, research methods, the topics we write about, the methods of organizing and presenting our ideas to others, and so on. Knowledge and understanding is the most familiar dimension, focusing on the "know-what" aspect of learning. What is "persona" in rhetoric? Where can I find reliable information on a particular topic? What is a "home page" on the World Wide Web? These are typical content questions.

Use of Prior and Emerging Experience

The use of prior and emerging experience involves the ability to draw on our own experience and connect it to our work. A crucial but often unrecognized dimension of learning is the ability to make use of prior experience as well as emerging experience in new situations. It is necessary to observe learners over a period of time while they engage in a variety of activities in order to account for the development of this important capability, which is at the heart of creative thinking and its application. In predetermined learning situations we cannot discover just how a learner's prior experience might be brought to bear to help scaffold new understandings, or how ongoing experience shapes the content knowledge or skills and strategies the learner is developing.

Critical Reflection

Reflection refers to our developing awareness of our own learning process, as well as more analytical approaches to reading, writing, and communication. When we speak of reflection as a crucial component of learning, we are not using the term in its commonsense meaning of reverie or abstract introspection. We are referring to the development of the learner's ability to step back and consider a situation critically and analytically, with growing insight into his or her own learning processes, a kind of metacognition. Learners need to develop this capability in order to use what they are learning in other contexts, to recognize the limitations or obstacles confronting them in a given situation, to take advantage of their prior knowledge and experience, and to strengthen their own performance.

It is important that students are made aware of the course strands and the five dimensions of learning early in the explanation of the Learning Record. Since students are measuring their own learning against the strands and dimensions, considering them in relation to their prior learning is a valuable activity because it provides students with a framework with which they can see their entire education as a cohesive and expansive learning process, one that have evolved in fantastic and often drastic ways

The Learning Record Structure

There are important rhetorical and pedagogical purposes for using the Learning Record model in writing classrooms, beyond the general approval currently enjoyed by portfolio evaluation. Overall, the Learning Record model engages students in the kinds of activities that foster critical thinking, foreground connections between writers, rhetoric, purposes, and audiences, and demonstrate meaningful uses of writing. In the process of becoming critical of their own work and their own work processes students become more aware of their performance in the class and how and what they are learning. Becoming aware of their abilities, limitations, and perfections is essential in the learning process; and it is from their observations of themselves and their work that students eventually create an evaluative argument about the success of their learning process. Students then consider what grade they believe they deserve based on the argument they have made.

The structure of the Learning Record provides students with the ability to view their learning process more clearly by being divided into five parts that, when viewed as whole, form an ecological document of student learning. The four parts are outlined below (see Part III for a detailed discussion of each part):

- Part A: Reflection
 1. Interview with someone who knows the student as a thinker, writer, reader, and user of technology
 2. Personal Reflection of their own education as a thinker, writer, reader, and user of technology, in terms of the course strands and the five dimensions of learning
- Data Collection
 1. Observations: brief observations – not discussions or reflections – of an activity students believe will contribute to their learning
 2. Samples of Work: work students complete for your course (forum postings, essays, essay drafts, comments on other students' essays, emails, etc.) or for another course they believe will contribute to their learning
- Part B: Analysis of Data
 1. Midterm
 2. Final
- Part C: Evaluation Argument and Grade Estimate
 1. Midterm
 2. Final

The individual parts come together as a unit when students analyze *selections* of the data – observations and samples of work – and then evaluate it at the midterm and for the final in terms of the course strands and five dimensions of learning. The Midterm Learning Record document serves several purposes, some primary ones being: it reminds students that the Learning Record is an on-going process that cannot be ignored; it allows students to see their own work in terms of theories of learning as they continue to work and not just after their work in the course is complete; it makes students aware of their progress in the course before it's too late for them to improve; it introduces students to the skills they will need to write an effective Final Learning Record; and it shows them that their grades are in fact based upon their individual arguments and not upon the work they have completed.

At Midterm, students go through a process of Moderations, which is a type of peer response, where students read each other's Records, suggest areas of improvement, and offer a grade. When the instructor returns the Record to the student, accompanying the comments and tracking of assignments, are the student's own grade, the moderator's grade, and the instructor's grade. It is important to note that the midterm grade reflects the argument the student is making at midterm, and is not considered when determining a student's final grade. The final grade for a student is based on the level of work and the quality of the student's argument at the end of the semester. As such, a student can receive a C at the midterm and an A for a final grade, just as a student can receive an A at midterm and a C for the final grade.

An Ecology of Observation and Learning

The Learning Record model seems to address many, if not most, of the problems about assessing student performance, whether in the classroom or in large scale assessment. Certainly, it departs from traditional assessment in its support for non-standardized ways to meet performance standards, and raises fundamental questions about the goals of any composition rubric: Are we concerned with creating students who only interested in writing toward a grade or students who are interested in learning throughout the course of their education? A system like the Learning Record is effective because the complexities inherent in diverse student backgrounds and multilingual capabilities as well as the demands and opportunities of new technologies require a more thoughtful and comprehensive look at the ways assessment affects student performance.

The Learning Record demonstrates the conceptual work that is necessary to implement a theory of composing situations as ecological systems. The conceptual work indicated by this model involves rethinking our whole approach to literacy education, requiring, in this case, close observation of naturally occurring activities, a regular practice of recording observations, summary interpretations of the meaning of the observations in terms of literacy development, and open sharing of those interpretations with the participants in the situation, who also contribute their perspectives. If this sounds like good ethnomethodology, that's what it most closely resembles. But it also, for the first time, seamlessly integrates literacy research, pedagogy, and assessment on a common theoretical foundation and grounds it in situated practice. Instead of setting arbitrary standards for achievement, it attempts to help the development of students toward their goals of coordination with the social and physical structures in their environments.

II. The Parts of the Learning Record

Part A, Data Collection, Part B, Part C, and Moderations

Part A, Data Collection, Part B, and Part C serve as the scaffolding upon which students build the portfolios they will use to support their rhetorical argument.

Part A: Reflection

Part A gives students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and developments in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and technology prior to the class. Assigned and completed within the first week or two of class, Part A helps establish the student's starting point for development over the course of the class and is what allows instructors the ability to consider individually the learning process of each student. Part A also engages students in first-hand research on a subject of great personal interest to them = themselves = and are introduced to interviewing skills and strategies, gathering field notes, and making summary interpretations which become part of the record.

Part A.1. Interview

Students interview a person who knows them well – a parent or other family member, teacher or close friend. Students should identify their relationship with the person and how they have known each other. The interview should focus on the person's impressions of the student's development as a reader, writer, and thinker.

Part A.2. Personal Reflection

Students reflect on their own development with respect to reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

When considering what questions to ask the interviewee and what to write in their reflections, students have found it helpful if they think not only in terms of the above listed categories, but in terms of the four major strands of work and five dimensions of learning discussed in detail in Part II. Introduction to the Learning Record. The two sections of Part A should be brief summaries, rather than long narrative accounts – no more than one-half to one page each.

See Appendix A for sample Interviews and Personal Reflections.

Data Collection: Observations and Samples of Work

The data collection section of the Online Learning Record provides observations of student activity and selections of the student's work representative of his or her development over the course of the class. These observations and samples are not intended to include everything the student has done in the class. Instead they are selections that represent the student's development over time. The observational notes, though brief, help students reflect on the relationship between direct perception and interpretation. Because these observations must present positive, rather than negative representations of activity, students are confronted with the powerful role of

language in shaping perceptions of reality. The selection of Samples of Work engages students in matching evidence and criteria for achievement, and forces students to consider the role of evidence in creating an argument.

Observations

Observations are confined to what is actually observed, without additional interpretation or evaluation. One observation taken alone may seem insignificant. However, a series of such observations taken over time provides important information about students' development that supplements the student's written "products" as evidence of learning. It is important to provide enough observations to give readers a good understanding of development over time. They are particularly helpful in documenting aspects of learning not easily accounted for by conventional methods of grading or assessment, such as the development of collaborative skills, increased independence, reflectiveness, and so on. They are also useful for documenting activities not well represented in final "products" – using an idea from one class in another class, attending a workshop to learn advanced HTML, a change in thinking about a topic, learning how to navigate the grammar handbook.

Samples of Work

Students should keep a comprehensive portfolio containing all work, including notes, diagrams, peer responses, final revisions, and teacher comments. This portfolio provides important evidence that all assigned work has been completed. From this portfolio, samples of student work are selected to include with the midterm and final Online Learning Record. These samples should be taken over the entire period of time and full range of activities covered by the class. They should include examples of informal and formal work, drafts and finished work, comments written for other students, and any other kinds of work that will give readers a good sense of the student's activities and progress over the course of the class. These samples of work are attached to (or linked to, in the case of Web OLRs) the OLR and a list of the items is provided in the Learning Record, together with a brief descriptive phrase or sentence.

Because the rhetorical strategies employed in observation are often foreign to students, teachers have found it helpful when introducing the concept to distinguish between observation of an activity and evaluating the actions in an activity. If students are having trouble with observing, try asking them to look at their actions in terms of one of the five dimensions of learning.

See Appendix C for sample Observations.

It should be noted, that not all the observations will find their ways into the Final Online Learning Record, but students will not know what they want to include until they are actually preparing the final document. As a result, they should be encouraged to make observations whenever they think they should; no observation is useless, but not having one later when one is needed to help make an argument, is a frustrating experience. Since students support their arguments in Parts B and C by referring to specific examples from their Observations and Samples of Work, the process of selecting which items to use encourages students to understand

that arguments are not linear, that what one selects as evidence will either support or distort their intended meaning.

See Appendix D for sample Samples of Work.

Part B: Analysis of Data

In the summary interpretation of Part B, students engage in synthesizing and analyzing the fragmentary data provided by the Data Collection section = their Observations and Samples of Work – in the light of Part A. They develop interpretations of this data as representative of their development across the five dimensions of literacy learning, and they connect these dimensions to the key themes or goals of the course. More specifically, students should think about their development across the five dimensions; consider evidence from their own writing, as well as observations made by themselves, other students, and the instructor; and make interpretations and come to some conclusions about their own learning in the course. This section is crucial to the effectiveness of the Learning Record. It helps readers understand what the bits and pieces of evidence gathered in the Data Collection section really mean for the student's learning. It does not need to be extensive, but it does need to connect the observations and samples of work explicitly to development across the five dimensions of learning in the main strands of work for the class.

Part B is broken into two sections, Midterm and Final. At midterm students should be encouraged to write in terms of what they have already accomplished and also to look for areas that need improvement. For example, if a student is doing all the work but is not participating in class discussion, in their Midterm part B that student may want to explore reasons why that may be so they can work on improving in the second half of the semester. The Final Part B is a more extensive discussion of the data, taking into consideration a whole semester of work.

See Appendix E for sample Midterm Part B and Final Part B.

Part C: Evaluative Argument

Part C provides an opportunity for students to reflect over the entire OLR and the class, evaluate progress and achievement, suggest next steps for development, and give the instructor feedback about the course. This section engages students in the process of making informed judgments based on the rhetorical process of selecting appropriate criteria, and making an argument for the judgment on those criteria supported by solid evidence, interpretations, and reasoning.

Part C.1. Midterm

Part C.1 helps students take stock of their progress, estimate an evaluation in the form of a grade, reflect on their plan of work for the remainder of the semester, and make suggestions for improving the functioning of the class. The instructor takes this opportunity to provide feedback based on the expectations for students at this level of instruction. It serves as a kind of "reality check" to prevent misunderstandings about the level of activity and progress we expect from students in our classes.

Part C.2. Final

Part C.2 reflects the student's development over the whole class and summary evaluation of achievement in the course (in the form of a grade), as supported by the evidence and interpretations in the Record. The instructor confirms that the evidence and interpretations support the student's evaluation and reports the grade earned. Where the evidence and interpretations are lacking or do not support the student's grade estimate, the instructor adjusts the grade appropriately and explains the adjustment to the student in the response to the final OLR.

When responding to and grading students' final OLRs, instructors are encouraged to focus on the argument the student is making in Part B and the evidenced used to support that argument because it is argument itself that eventually determines the grade. Because the argument determines the grade, when a student disagrees with a grade an instructor assigns (which they are known to do) all the instructor has to do is point out the faults in their argument or the evidence used to support their argument in terms of the five dimensions of learning. Grading, then, becomes more about how the students are representing themselves rhetorically and as learners than about calculating a number that is based on vague, indefinable standards.

See Appendix F for sample Midterm Part C and Final Part C.

Student grades are based on the level of development across the five dimensions of learning. When writing Parts B and C, students should be encouraged to look closely at the definitions for each grade level so their evaluations can be as accurate as possible. Grade levels can be summarized as follows:

A	Represents outstanding participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with very high quality in all work produced for the course. Evidence of significant development across the five dimensions of learning. The Learning Record at this level demonstrates activity that goes significantly beyond the required course work in one or more course strands.
B	Represents excellent participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with consistently high quality in course work. Evidence of marked development across the five dimensions of learning.
C	Represents good participation in all course activities; all assigned work completed, with generally good quality overall in course work. Evidence of some development across the five dimensions of learning.
D	Represents uneven participation in course activities; some gaps in assigned work completed, with inconsistent quality in course work. Evidence of development across the five dimensions of learning is partial or unclear.
F	Represents minimal participation in course activities; serious gaps in assigned work completed, or very low quality in course work. Evidence of development is not available.

Moderations

The moderation process also contributes to student development in important ways. Students are paired to read and discuss the online learning records of several of their peers. The partners focus on the completeness and quality of the overall portfolio of work together with its learning record. Since they have shared the same sequence of activities in the class, they can make informed suggestions for the selection of examples to be included, comment on the observations, and respond to the interpretations and conclusions about the quality of work. This activity engages students in actively reflecting on the composition of an effective portfolio of work and its overview. How much material should be included? What range of material will best represent the student's development? Should there be more observations, or a greater range of them? Increasingly, portfolios of work are being used as measures in workplace environments; even where they are not mandated, they can serve as powerful evidence of work accomplished. But beyond this rather mundane professional purpose, it also engages students in reflecting about their own development as learners, helps them take more responsibility for that development, and encourages them to pursue it actively.

The learning record does not abrogate the responsibility of the teacher to provide students, their families, and institutions with appropriate reporting about student achievement and progress; rather it helps ensure that such reporting is valid, supported by solid evidence, and meaningful. Meanwhile, this model of evaluation reflects back to students our care and concern for their continued progress, our confidence in their own observations and interpretations, and our respect for their judgments about their own learning.

See Appendix H for sample Moderations questionnaires.

III. Brief History of the Learning Record Online

This handbook is written specifically with the goals of the RHE306 instructor in mind, and serves as the next step in a tradition begun in London in the mid-1980s when elementary school teachers became convinced that traditional grading systems could no longer accurately measure the literacy development of their students. Confronted with large class sizes and great ethnic and linguistic diversity, educators Myra Barrs, Hillary Hester, and Sue Ellis looked to the theories of James Britton and Lev Vygotsky, and developed the *Primary Language Record*, an evaluative system that “offers a common conceptual framework within which groups of teachers can work, and a common language for reflecting both on [student’s] progress and their own practice” (O’Sullivan).

From 1988-1990, The California Literature Project summer institutes and academies hosted staff from the London Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE) to learn about the Primary Language Record (PLR). In 1990-1991, the Literature Project sponsored a Core Development Group of teachers, K-12, representing geographic regions throughout the state to begin study of the PLR with Centre staff members. A pilot seminar series began in San Diego City Schools, conducted by two teachers from the Core Group. The California version of PLR expanded its focus to secondary schools and to all subjects. Presentations about the CLR were made in 1992 to the California Reading Association, International Reading Association, National Council of Teachers of English, and other professional organizations. The response was enthusiastic.

In 1994-95, the CLR project ended its university affiliation to establish the Center for Language in Learning, a non-profit corporation to support the use of the CLR as a statewide student evaluation system which integrates classroom-based assessment with teaching and learning. Ten to twenty schools across state began phasing in the use of the CLR. *The Handbook, Grades K-6*, was revised and published; computerized version were tested. Meetings in New York City with members of the New York Assessment Network as well as beginnings of the Online Learning Record at the University of Texas in Austin. The Online Learning Record expands on the prior Learning Record models to account for college-level course work. M.A. Syverson, with John Slatin as co-principle investigator, submitted a proposal under Computer Aided Education and Training Initiative sponsored by DARPA, to support the research and development of this model for MOOs and MUDs (text-based virtual environments for composing and collaboration). The proposal was funded for 1995-1997, during which the number of instructors using the Learning Record in model classes at the University of Texas expanded. Information about the Online Learning Record soon became available at Dr. Syverson’s Web Site, and teachers at other institutions began to use the model and link to this information. Presentations about the Online Learning Record project were made at the College Conference on Composition and Communication and at the Computers and Writing Conference.

IV. RHE306 and The Learning Record Online Website

RHE306 Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Texas at Austin is a course in which (primarily) first year students learn to identify, evaluate, construct, and organize effective rhetorical arguments. In doing so, students write four essays, each one being a different kind of argument – definition, evaluative, causal, and proposal – and in doing so students learn the value of being able to understand complex discourse and create lucid prose. What the Learning Record brings to RHE306 is a way for students to look critically at not only what they have learned (i.e. how to produce an interesting essay), but *how* they learned it and how that learning affects their overall performance in the class. Overall, the Learning Record model engages students in the kinds of activities that foster critical thinking, foreground connections between writers, rhetoric, purposes, and audiences, and demonstrate meaningful uses of writing.

The Learning Record is, in short, an evaluative argument. Instead of students evaluating something they find outside of the class, students are asked to evaluate their own progress as learners in a course that despite its structure of essentially four distinct units is undergirded by the ultimate goal of improving students' rhetorical reading, writing, and research skills. When writing their Midterm and Final LROs, students use their own work – Observations and Sample of Work – as data to support the arguments they make to justify what they believe to be the grade they earned for the course. Asking students to argue for their own grade may sound risky at first because we assume that students will always write that they deserve an A. But what the Learning Record encourages students to do is look at their own learning in terms of an established grading criteria and then determine if the work they have done over the course of the semester satisfies the requirement for that grade. If it does – and they have the rhetorical abilities to make a successful argument for that grade – that is grade they deserve. If not, the teacher has the ability to argue against the grade, using the student's own work as evidence. Still, what is important about the Learning Record system is the amount of attention paid to student work – what they produce, what they explore outside of class as a result of what they learn, and how their knowledge in certain areas has increased over the course of the semester. Most importantly however, is that the Learning Record structure enables students to understand (perhaps for the first time in their education) that they, their work, and their ideas play an integral part in their own education, that education is more than working toward a grade; it is working toward learning something over a period of time.

One of the major changes the Learning Record system creates in RHE306 is that letter grades are not given on individual assignments; letter grades are given only at the midterm and the end of the semester. Instead, teachers are encouraged to focus on commenting as opposed to grading – and most find it liberating that they no longer have to worry about applying a static value to a skill we hope will improve over the course of the semester. Comments should consider the problems a student is having with a particular assignment, but they should be written in terms of what the student could do to improve that problem in their next assignment. Asking students to look ahead to their next assignment while reading comments enables students to see that writing is an evolving process, that the skills from one essay are needed (and can be improved) in the next. Teachers and students can then see how their skills have improved from the beginning to the end of a semester.

The Learning Record is also invaluable because it provides a way for instructors to view their students' experiences as learners who can help them develop their teaching skills. The experience of reading through student observations, of considering arguments students make regarding how they feel they have improved over the course of a semester, and of reflecting on what assignments catalyzed the greatest amounts of learning is extremely valuable because instructors begin to learn how different students learn and how what they assign affects how students learn. The Learning Record encourages teachers to be involved in their students' learning in ways that traditional grading methods cannot, and by working with the Record online, both students and instructors are confronted with learning something more than just rhetorical arguments. They must learn how to read, create, and work in and with a new medium that can transform the learning experience far greater than any traditional classroom.

V. Appendices

This section contains the following appendices.

- A. The Learning Record Document Form
- B. Sample Part A
- C. Sample Observations
- D. Sample Samples of Work
- E. Sample Part B
- F. Sample Part C
- G. Discussion of Small Multiples
- H. Moderation Questionnaires
- I. Principles Behind Good Practice in Assessment
- J. Frequently Asked Questions

A. The Learning Record Document Form

Your Name:

Course:

Part A

A.1 Interview with another person who knows you well—for example, a parent or other family member, close friend, or teacher. Please identify your relationship with the person and how long he or she has known you. The interview should focus on the person's impressions of your development as a reader, writer, and thinker. If you have completed a Learning Record interview like this in another class recently, you may use it here.

A.2 Reflections on your own development with respect to reading, writing, speaking and listening, and other course strands.

Data Collection

1. Observations (made periodically during the semester).

Observations should include a range of interactions: individual activities, small group work, whole-class activities. These are very brief, informal notes about activity you have actually observed, rather than just opinions, feelings, or judgments. Please date each observation and put your observations in order by date. Observations should focus on activity related to the class and its course strands.

2. Samples of Work

Please provide a list of each item you've included with your Learning Record Online, together with a brief descriptive phrase or sentence and the date it was created.

Samples of written work (formal and informal writing)

Samples of comments by others (professor, other students)

Samples of other activities (i.e., interchanges, notes, planning diagrams, and so on)

Part B

B.1 Midterm Summary: Summary interpretation of observations and evidence in terms of the four major strands of work and the five dimensions of learning. Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

B.2 Final Summary: Summary interpretation of observations and evidence covering the whole semester in terms of the four major strands of work and the five dimensions of learning. Be sure to connect your interpretations with specific examples included in the observations and samples of work.

Four major strands of work: rhetoric, research, technology, and collaboration (your course strands may be different, depending on the course)

Five dimensions of learning:

- confidence and independence
- knowledge and understanding
- skills and strategies
- use of prior and emerging experience
- reflectiveness (critical awareness)

Part C

C.1 Midterm evaluation

- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade
- Suggestions for your own further development during remainder of semester
- Suggestions for class activities or for the professor to better support learning

C.2 Final evaluation

- Reflections on semester's learning experience
- Any supplementary information or comments not included in Parts A & B
- Any suggestions for the professor for future classes
- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade

I will honor all reasonable grade claims supported by observations and evidence.

B. Sample Part A

Part A provides information about the student's experiences and background in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and technology prior to the class. This information comes from two sources: the student's parent, past teacher, or other person who knows the student well (Part A.1), and the student him or herself (Part A.2). Typically this part of the record is assigned and completed within the first week or two of class. This helps establish the student's "starting point" for development over the course of the class. The two sections of part A should be brief summaries, rather than long narrative accounts, no more than one-half to one page each.

Part A.1

Example 1:

Interview with mother:

L. does not have a very diverse background when it comes to reading, but he does have his favorites. He enjoys books made from movies, such as 'Jurassic Park'. He also enjoys horror by Stephen King and Dean Koontz. At his bartending job, he loves to read up on beer trivia and tastes, in order to benefit his guests. L. does not enjoy writing that much but he has shown me that he can write very well when he tries. From small poems and letters to past assignments and creative writing, he can do some very nice things on paper. Here is L's forte. He is very interested in technology and its advancements. From basic electronics to high-tech computers, L. knows something about it, if not everything about it. He enjoys to show and teach his friends and coworkers the thing that modern man is doing in today's world.

Example 2:

INTERVIEW WITH M. M. (my father)

I have lived in three different countries; Pakistan, Libya and America. Therefore, I have come across people of different cultures and have seen the social system of various places, which has given me a broad exposure.

I started going to Pakistani school in Libya. I started learning English as a second language from first grade. Literature taught in English classes was primarily British. I grew up reading Gulliver's adventures, Tom Sawyer etc. However, starting from sixth grade I got interested in Urdu (native language of Pakistan) literature and almost completely gave up English. In addition to English, I also learned to read and write Arabic for religious purposes, But don't really understand it.

In eighth grade I moved back to Pakistan, and lived there for about three years. English literature taught in Pakistan was very basic and therefore wasn't very helpful in developing my skills as English reader or writer.

First time I was exposed to American literature was when I moved to America during the Gulf War and started going to high school. In terms of reading and writing I didn't have significant problems but speaking English was a major problem because I had never spoken English before. Last five years, while studying in America should have affected the way I think and perceive things the most. Education system here is pretty good. That has given me a good start to acquire necessary skills in reading and writing and making opinions about the issues. However, my exposure to things other than course work e.g. religious studies, magazines and newspaper about current affairs etc, is limited. To improve myself: I should find time to study beyond the required class work, try to be aware of the changing trends both in my professional and social surroundings around me. I should regularly follow issues of my interest through news papers, through latest books, and through discussion in broadcast media.

Part A.2

Example:

I was always the one in the family who knew how to program the VCR and set its clock; consequently, my dad thought that I was a technological genius, and urged me down the path to nerdness at every turn. Our first computer was a Texas Instruments. I forget the model number. I would write 100-line monsters in BASIC and cry when I had to turn off the computer, because it didn't have a disk drive. Then we got an Apple IIc. I'd sit around typing in AppleSoft BASIC programs when my dad was around, and play Pinball Construction Set and Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy when he wasn't. By high school that computer wasn't sexy anymore, and we bought a 386. This was a brilliant purchase, because it had something the previous two computers did not--a modem. We got a Prodigy account, and soon I was spending every afternoon on the music boards discussing indie rock and building friendships with faceless strangers all over the country. When I came to UT in the fall of 1993, I was eager to get internet access. One of the first things I did when I figured out SLIP was to download Doom--I forgot about the internet for a while. Doom eventually got old, and I began to familiarize myself with various aspects of the internet: usenet, the worldwide web, e-mail, and mailing lists. I've used IRC once, also; I spent the time antagonizing the chatterson #limbaugh. It was good, malicious fun, but I don't generally like to hurt people's feelings.

Despite my appreciation of the computer, my main interests are in liberal arts, specifically literature and creative writing. I'm an avid, albeit slow, reader, and I love to write, albeit slowly. I spent some time writing for my high school newspaper, and English teachers loved me and I loved them. Had I followed my non-technological interests from the onset of college, my GPA might be more impressive today, but my dad somehow convinced me that it was in my interest to someday have a job. I spent a year in electrical engineering and a semester in computer science. The classes varied from painfully dull to woefully confusing, and most disconcertingly, so were my classmates. Every CS major I met loved They Might Be Giants. I hate They

Might Be Giants. I just do. During my semester in CS, the only A I made was in E316K: Masterworks of British Literature. I knew plenty of English majors with reasonably good taste in music. These two factors made it clear what I had to do, and I changed my major to English. And here I am.

C. Sample Observations

Regularly recorded observations provide brief snapshots of students' activities and development over time. Each observation includes three main parts:

1. The date

2. The activity

3. A brief description of what is observed. This can be in the form of notes, rather than complete sentences. It should be clear from the observation whether the activity involves the student alone, with a partner or small group, with the teacher, or with the class as a whole. The activity observed might be in class or outside of class, in the lab, library, or anywhere else.

1/25/96 Platinum Blood. I found the reading to be a little strange since I am not used to reading stories like this, but found it to be interesting. I could focus on what I wanted to read and skip through other parts. My attention was actually focused on the story because of the hypertext format.

Observations are confined to what is actually observed, without additional interpretation or evaluation. One observation taken alone may seem insignificant. However, a series of such observations taken over time provides important information about students' development that supplements the student's written "products" as evidence of learning. It is important to provide enough observations to give readers a good understanding of development over time. They are particularly helpful in documenting aspects of learning not easily accounted for by conventional methods of grading or assessment, such as the development of collaborative skills, increased independence, reflectiveness, and so on. They are also useful for documenting activities not well represented in final "products"--an experiment that missed the mark, a disk crash that wiped out days of work, a change in thinking about a topic. The observations below were taken from a variety of students.

Typical observation of reading and research activity:

2/20/96 Reflections of Nielson--I reached one of my goals when I read Nielson. I found out the history of the Internet and hypertext. I also realized that I have been exposed to hypertext for a long time with out knowing what it truly was and its capabilities.

Typical observations of rhetorical activity:

Example 1:

2/22/95 I feel that after creating the project 1 final, I found using the hypertext easier to understand. When writing the draft, I found it confusing trying to fit the information into the boxes and linking them. After working with the final draft I finally understood the concept and found it easy. I have also noticed with this second project that now I can find more to say when writing a paper.

Example 2:

4/11/96 Today our groups had to turn in our topic proposals for project 4. Since project 4 was an open topic, we decided to create a men's magazine. We figured we could make our project and have some fun in the process.

Typical observations of collaborative activity:

Example 1:

3/4/96 Project #3 Proposal--Brainstorming with T. helped spark my interests and imagination. We bounced questions off each other which helped us form our MOO and Web theme. Her questions really helped me formulate my ideas.

Example 2:

February 22, 1996 I thought I knew Storyspace well...then we were told to write a process account! I'm glad that this project (2) is in pairs, because there are still many features of Storyspace that I don't feel proficient enough to explain. I hope that my process is coherent. We are going to work on a format of organization to hopefully help us out in that area...through headings and screenshot examples. Also, I thought about adding a question and answer section at the end. I feel that I a little less intimidated by the whole hypertext concept, but there is still a little uneasiness. I hope that by working with K. we can fill in the gaps in each other's knowledge.

Typical observations of technological activity:

Example 1:

2/6/96 Interchange--Interchange taught me how to speak more specific about a topic instead of using gross overgeneralizations. It did this by forcing me to type what I was thinking. Even though I was having a conversation on interchange it was very different from actually speaking.

Example 2:

March 22, 1996 I learnt how to copy holding the (options+apple) key down

Example 3:

2/22/96 MOOspace--Visiting the MOO opened my mind. At first, I felt lost because everything was happening so fast. I wanted to respond to people but I couldn't type fast enough or I would forget the command. After exploring and getting a feel for the MOO I gained more confidence. Being in the MOO really invoked a deep feeling I have had for technology for a long time--skepticism. This whole other sense of reality intrigues me but for some unknown reason I can't seem to fully emerge myself. I must fear losing my true sense of reality - it is such a fine line. I

wonder how many people have already crossed it because of technology like MOOs. Everyone has their form of escapism but with some technology like MOOs this escape can become a true reality. Like you say, these worlds aren't virtual...they are real.

D. Sample Samples of Work

Students should keep a comprehensive portfolio containing all work, including notes, diagrams, peer responses, final revisions, and teacher comments. This portfolio provides important evidence that all assigned work has been completed. From this portfolio, samples of student work are selected to include with the Learning Record Online. These samples should be taken over the entire period of time and full range of activities covered by the class. They should include examples of informal and formal work, drafts and finished work, comments written for other students, and any other kinds of work that will give readers a good sense of the student's activities and progress over the course of the class. These samples of work are attached to (or linked to, in the case of Web LROs) the LRO and a list of the items is provided in the Learning Record, together with a brief descriptive phrase or sentence. The Learning Record Online should NOT include ALL of the work the student has completed, but rather a REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLING.

Example 1 (E309):

For my final portfolio, the following items are offered for evidence. My personal comments accompany some of the items as a text entitled "COMMENTS".

Title:

Speer 1/23 -> My interview with classmate C. M.

Speer 2/13 -> The final copy of Project 1

Speer 2/20 -> A response paper to one of the course readings

Speer 2/29 -> The final copy of Project 2, which I worked on with C.C.

Speer 4/4 -> The complete final copy of my Project 3

Speer 5/2 -> The complete final copy of my Project 4

Teacher comments -> Comments from Professor Syverson

Student comments -> Comments from fellow classmates

Example 2 (E330):

Samples of written work (formal and informal writing)

1/23/96 - L. interview...I interviewed J. L. for his A.2 interview

2/15/96 - Project 1...a Story Space project that discusses hypertext and writing environments

2/19/96 - response to Nielsen...an informal response to reading chapters 1 – 6 in

Nielsen's "Multimedia and Hypertext: The Internet and Beyond"

3/5/96 - Project 2/3 Topic Proposal...my first ideas about what I wish to do with this project

Samples of comments by others (professor, other students)

2/5/96 - Dr. Syverson's comments for topic proposal 1

2/9/96 - A. K.'s comments for draft 1

2/9/96 - L.D.'s comments for draft 1)

2/13/96 - Dr. Syverson's comments for draft 1

2/28/96 - Dr. Syverson's comments for project 1 final

Samples of other activities (i.e., interchanges, notes, planning diagrams, and so on)

1/18/96 - Interchange

2/6/96 - Interchange

3/20/96 - Mondrian Paintings...this folder contains all the scanned images of Mondrian's paintings that I intended to use in my Project 3 web pages

4/2/96 - MUSH log

4/29/96 - Project 3 - Draft Version

5/2/96 - MUSH log

E. Sample Part B

Part B provides a summary interpretation of the observations and samples of student work in terms of the specific goals for development in key areas of the class. This section is crucial to the effectiveness of the LRO. It helps readers understand what the bits and pieces of evidence gathered in the Data Collection section really mean for the student's learning. It does not need to be extensive, but it does need to connect the observations and samples of work explicitly to development across the five dimensions of learning in the main strands of work for the class. Students in my classes prepare a Part B summary at the midterm, then add to the midterm summary at the end of the class for the final Learning Record Online.

Midterm Part B

Summary interpretation of observations and evidence in terms of the four major strands of work and the five dimensions.

Four major strands: rhetoric, research, technology and collaboration.

Five dimensions: confidence and independence, knowledge and understanding, skills and strategies, use of prior and emerging experience, reflectiveness (critical awareness)

Example:

I feel that over the course of the semester I have improved my research skills by using the Internet more to find useful information and personal opinions on subjects. I also feel I have become a better writer of rhetoric. I have a greater sense of what to write and I no longer worry about whether I'm getting my point across in a effective manner or not. I have been dependent on technology for a while, but now I'm actually able to recognize that dependence and learn from it. Computers are a main part of my life now, where before it was a gifted machine. I also think that I have gained a lot of confidence in my writing because of writing so much recently. I enjoy getting help and input from others, but I also enjoy working independently as well. I have also noticed myself looking for other strategies to solving the problems I encounter while working on projects. I also see myself looking back on what I have done to see what I could have done better or different. So now I know where my weaknesses lie and am able to look at a current writing activity and focus on problem areas. Working with Story Space I found to be very challenging. I used the Windows version at home and was learning on the Mac version in class. Not only did I have to figure out the differences between the two programs, I also had to overcome these problems. One of these problems was that the program would freeze and I would have to start over. After writing the same paragraph about five times I began saving after about every sentence. But it was very frustrating to loose everything consistantly.

Final Part B:

Example:

I gained valuable skills and confidence about my writing during the second half of the semester. Writing in the MOO was a challenging process that helped me focus on my writing style. The MOO forced me to think of how my writing would be interpreted by the reader and whether or not the voice was passive or active. I realized that writing creatively is fun and not painful. Since I did not have any prior experience with creative writing, I felt lost at where to start. Working with T. helped me face my creative writing fear. Once we began writing our MOO descriptions, I could see how our writing matured throughout the MOO. We became more adventurous with adjectives and verbs and decided to take risks and embellish the reader with rich text. It really was a neat experience. By doing this we created a writing strategy. First, we would make a list of things that would be in the type of room we were trying to describe. Next, we would make a list of words relating to all the senses that we wanted to discuss. Finally, we used these two lists to formulate our sentences which ultimately became the descriptions found in our MOO. Using this strategy really helped us work efficiently and made the writing process more adventurous.

The MOO and Web projects required some research about the region we were creating. Our original project required massive amounts of research because we wanted to re-create the entire world, country by country. We decided this task was nearly impossible to complete within two months. Instead we chose 4 places and focused our attention on one complete region-Kashmir. We conducted most of our research on-line. We gathered most of our information and graphics from Travel agency homepages and Indian homepages found through searches on Yahoo and various search indexes on the internet. T. offered another source of information since her culture and religion are close to Kashmir. She is from Pakistan and has traveled over to Kashmir. Many of our descriptions come from her traveling experiences. I gained confidence using the internet for obtaining information. I love physical libraries and sometimes I shy away from the electronic databases because I miss the physical feeling of being within the walls of the library. However, some things can't be found in the library just like some things can't be found on the internet. I think this will soon change.

Technology always offers opportunity. Learning new technology and obtaining skills that are useful in today's society is very essential to a college graduate. This class taught me useful skills and gave me confidence in how to use these skills properly. Now I know how to program using HTML and MOO commands for AcademICK. Learning these skills helped me pinpoint an interest within geography. I decided to switch my track from secondary education to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). With your encouragement, I contacted Dr. F. and discussed my interests with him. He gladly welcomed me to work with him this summer at the Virtual Workshop Conference in June. I would have never been able to work with Dr. F. if I did not have any experience with HTML programming. This class really opened a door for me and I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn new and valuable skills.

Collaboration is an essential component in this class. Working with a partner, especially T., helped ignite my creativity and focus on my writing style. My partner increased my knowledge about programming and in the process, we developed a great friendship. We helped each other with grammar and style. It was easy to accept constructive criticism from her because we were working as a team. Our project reflects our team effort. We both focused on each part together. Overall, I enjoyed working with a partner on these projects because it helped generate creative ideas and we shared knowledge about our technical expertise.

Complete Part B (Midterm and Final together)

This example shows a combined midterm and final Part B. Notice that this student chose to organize her summary according to the five dimensions:

confidence and independence

Midterm: I feel confident in my progress in the class so far. The projects that I have worked on have been very broad, and sometimes that can be difficult, since I am used to having a definite assignment. The structure of the class is different from the others I have taken at the University, but it was intended to be so. I think my confidence in my own writing may be underscored by this new approach, but I think in the end that I will definitely benefit from it as a writer, researcher, and a thinker.

Final: I feel my confidence has greatly increased since the midterm of the semester. The format of the class became comfortable for me, and the freedom to do whatever I wanted to on the projects was beginning to be taken advantage of. As a writer I was able to use HTML to organize my observations in a logical way. I was able to translate much of the hypertext theory into HTML, which made the transition much easier. As a thinker, using HTML and hypertext has totally changed the way I think and approach writing. Now I want to do all my research papers in HTML!

knowledge and understanding

Midterm: Perhaps the most difficult part of this class so far was learning to use a Macintosh. I have used PC's since I was thirteen and I never used a Mac until this class. Thus, it was intimidating at first to take a course where my success ultimately depended on learning to use this computer. Luckily, I quickly learned just how easy the computers are to use. I also learned a great deal about the Internet by doing on-line research for my hypertext. In addition, the readings are a addition to what is being discussed in class, and they have further expanded my knowledge about the Internet and the new world we are facing in the coming years.

Final: Using a Macintosh now has become very easy to use, and I think I am at almost equal level with my PC. Doing research became easier to do on-line, because of the prior knowledge of the previous projects, I learned how not to do research. The readings continued to be informative and relevant to what we were studying in class at the time.

skills and strategies

Midterm: The content of the material I have been exposed to is great in this class. As stated the readings bring what we are learning into a context with the world. The article "The Digital Juggernaut" shows us a picture of the world where the skills we are learning in this class will have a profound effect on our lives in the future. We are in the midst of a new era for writers, and being able to communicate effectively is the main focus of the class. We are learning the places on the Internet, like Lycos and Alta Vista, where we can seek out the knowledge that we want. We no longer have to wait for someone to give it to us. This class has taught me to seek out the information that I'm interested in, and to be able to communicate in an exciting new way: hypertext. The hypertext activity was our introduction into this new and still-evolving writing style.

Final: After learning how to use hypertext I was finally able to tackle my next challenge: HTML. At first using BBEdit was very intimidating, because I knew none of the commands, and my pages always turned out bland. Using trial and much error I was able to slowly gain proficiency. I am most proud of learning HTML, because most of the learning I did on my own. In this way I think I will retain the knowledge much better, because it's a more personal experience. I learned how to manage my time around the class and take advantage of the open nature of the course. Seeking out new information continued for me in this way.

use of prior and emerging experience

Midterm: My own experience with writing is somewhat limited, but being able to link it with computers makes the learning process easier and more fun. Having some past experience with computers, I don't feel as intimidated by the technology as some of the others in the class. I also feel that this past experience makes me desire to create work that is above average at all times. Sometimes this desire can be bad, because I sometimes try to do something different and new, and it turns out bad. I will say that the new technologies that are discussed in class, and the new ways of writing that we discuss go well with the way I think. The unconventional approach to this class is much more reflective of the real world, particularly in terms of evaluation. This combination of prior and emerging experience is well seen in the hypertext project we did. It is a fusion of something we are familiar with: writing a paper, and something new: hypertext, in order to create something that can be both learned from and applied to new scenarios later in our development as writers and thinkers.

Final: I feel that now I finally have the ability to do what I usually try to do in projects. I have the background now to be able to do projects that are above average. I can go the extra mile to make my work stand out, and this makes me very content, because the extra work that was needed at the beginning of the course greatly helped me in the ability to do this. Although sometimes it still turns out bad, the knowledge that I have enables me to quickly correct myself. The emerging experience is illustrated well by the HTML projects, especially the Johnny Mnemonic project using frames. I was able to build on this new experience to create our Project 4 pages, which I am very proud of.

reflectiveness (critical awareness)

Midterm: I often consider myself to be my own worst critic. It is easy for me to look upon something I have done and be able to criticize it. My main problem is that sometimes this criticism is mainly destructive. I often look to others for opinions on my own work, since I often consider it to be lacking something, but I do not know what. It is when others can view my work that I am more able to correct the problems and revise what I have written. I value the opinions of my classmates, and I take all suggestions made in our peer evaluations, because am not very good at being able to revise and improve something on my own. I think that when I am truly able to do this in an effective manner, then I will have met this goal.

Final: While I still greatly value peer evaluations, I have finally been able to approach my work from a constructive point of view. I think this is especially applicable to HTML. By fixing up the drafts and spicing up the pages, you can really SEE the difference when you make improvements. This type of gratification is contagious, and it passes into other aspects of this class, and others as well.

F. Sample Part C

Part C provides an opportunity to reflect over the entire LRO and the class, evaluate progress and achievement, suggest next steps for development, and give the instructor feedback about the course. At the midterm, Part C.1 helps students take stock of their progress, estimate an evaluation in the form of a grade, and reflect on their plan of work for the remainder of the semester. The instructor takes this opportunity to provide feedback based on our expectations for students at this level of instruction. It serves as a kind of "reality check" to prevent misunderstandings about the level of activity and progress we expect from students in our classes. At the end of the course, Part C.2 reflects the student's development over the whole class and summary evaluation of achievement in the course (in the form of a grade), as supported by the evidence and interpretations in the Record. The instructor confirms that the evidence and interpretations support the student's evaluation and reports the grade earned. Where the evidence and interpretations are lacking or do not support the student's grade estimate, the instructor adjusts the grade appropriately and explains the adjustment to the student in the response to the final LRO.

Example of Part C.1 (Midterm):

- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade
- Suggestions for your own further development during remainder of semester
- Suggestions for class activities or for the professor to better support learning

At this point, I would give myself a C-. By the end of the semester, I hope to be recommending a much higher grade for myself, but I'm not sure how I plan to get there. I think perhaps that I have a tendency to take advantage of the informal nature of the class, but I would hate to see the class format change. I feel like I ought to learn to work within the confines of informality (what an odd phrase). If I can do well in this class, then I think there is still hope for me as a responsible student and a responsible person. And if there's still hope for me, then there's still hope for all of mankind.

I like the way the class is being handled so far, but I would like to see more opportunities for the class to interact with each other using the technology around us. More Interchanges would be great fun, and I think a mailing list or newsgroup would be an ideal way for us to network and bounce ideas off each other outside of class. And quite frankly, I'm too shy to pipe in during the class discussion. I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Example of Part C.2 (Final Portfolio)

- Reflections on semester's learning experience
- Any supplementary information or comments not included in Parts A & B
- Any suggestions for the professor for future classes
- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade

This semester I have learned many things. Some tangible and others not so easy to pinpoint. At the beginning of this semester, I thought I was advanced in the area of technology. After a few days however, I realized that through college I had avoided a very valuable resource--Macs. I had not use a Mac since the Classic came out and I wrongfully assumed that PC were much superior. Luckily, through the class I have become familiar with Macs and come to appreciate the complex workings of an operating system that makes things appear so intuitive. Other things that I have learned are how to use a scanner and programs to manipulate images such as Photoshop and Gif converter. I dabbled with Director and made several small movies. Using a video camera and a pound of silly puddy, I made a small stop-action film. This has always been an interest of mine and through this course I rediscovered it. [It is included in this portfolio although it wasn't an assignment]

I learned the effectiveness of brainstorming and using mindmaps when in the beginning stages of a project. This helped me in preparing a research paper on balancing the federal budget for a senior honors economics class. My paper earned me an A and is to date the finest piece of writing I have accomplished. In it I dealt with many complex economic models and through brainstorming activities, combined them in a fresh way.

I have also learned to navigate and create in an exciting and pliable medium called a MUD. Muds allow an author to design new worlds and fashion an environment in which the reader decides which way the story goes. In project two, I have started another world in which a player must make split second decisions in an effort to survive while protecting the community as an officer of the law. This project is the building block of what I foresee as an expanding and growing reality. The first adventure in the Mud I call Police Story is one in which the player, as a rookie cop, must answer a robbery in progress call. In its present form, if the rookie makes the wrong move they die as would a real officer. Luckily, through the magic of Mud they can learn from the experience and return to avenge their death. I was not able to figure out how to do a few things in time for this project such as having a timed based trigger that would kill a hostage if the player did not respond fast enough. Over the summer, I feel that I learn more Mush coding and add several other adventures. Eventually, I would like to build it to such a point that I would need to port it to another server due to all of the eager traffic.

One of the less obvious areas in which I have learned is the area of confidence. Through the varied and diverse areas of writing I have been exposed to this semester, I feel much more confident as a writer. I have noticed a steady improvement in my essay scores this semester and this is a direct result of class work in 330c. This confidence has even crossed over to my writing of Chinese. Rather than worry about writing in Chinese, I concentrated on the same steps as I would when preparing a mind map for an English essay. Using the mind map I then sat and wrote a three page essay which is my best writing in four semesters of Mandarin. <p>

In conclusion, this semester has been a refreshing way to end this portion of my college career. At times throughout the last six years, I have felt disenchanted with

learning in college. In many classes, I found rote memorization was the key to success. The teacher told you what they thought, then on the test you tell them again what they thought. Although I know that a certain base of knowledge must be built to grow from, many teachers seem to be uninterested in challenging students to create and think on their own. This class was just what I needed to cure a serious case of senioritis. Now, rather than eagerly await the start of a new chapter, I wish I only could put off graduating just one more semester. This clarity seems much like the sharpness of vision I encountered during the three days before the project was originally due. Suddenly, I knew exactly what I wanted to do and if only I had more time...Alas, the semester as well as college are over but this class has reminded me that learning is what I enjoy. I will experience this feeling as long as I seek out new and exciting challenges and I won't have to pay continuously escalating tuition for that privilege!

- Any suggestions for the professor for future classes<p>

Keep up the good work. The work shops served to clear up much of the confusion I felt in the beginning of the semester.

I would recommend that in the first week you introduce students to the multimedia lab so that students may dabble with Director. I would also encourage you to follow up on your plans to get zip drives. The ability to keep all projects on one disk would make things much easier. After a while, it becomes hard to keep track of all of files on different disks.

My last suggestion is to require the groups to turn in the skeleton of their class web project the week before everything else. I feel that part of the class was hurried since we felt a time constraint with finishing the other projects.

- Estimated evaluation in terms of grade<p>

At first, I did not understand the point of this learning record. "Why do I have to document my progress for the teacher?" I thought. After a whole semester of learning and growing I now have a better understanding. Without this record, I may not have even noticed my own progress so I can imagine how difficult it is for a teacher to do this. Every student enters the Fac 9 with a different level of expertise, a different way of looking at things. Setting one arbitrary criteria would not fairly evaluate how much learning and progress had been made.

The lessons learned in E330c have already paid huge dividends for me. I saw a steady improvement in my writing grades in both Chinese and my other writing component class. The exposure to hypertextual authoring enabled me to speak knowledgeably during a crucial interview for a consulting position.(I start in June and with luck, this time next year I will be on a project in Paris, London, or Australia!!!) The first six months of the job will be performing technical writing and the exposure to organizing and conveying information in many forms will help me immensely. The work that you see in my projects, is the tip of the iceberg in terms of the amount of learning and growth this class has started.

At the middle of the semester, I could not see much progress or improvement in my work and felt my work to be at the B- level. I was not satisfied with my efforts in collaboration, grammar, or technical learning. Since that time I have made great efforts to improve. I began to interact with my peers more. Specifically D., L., and M. Each shared with me a different area of knowledge. D. is very knowledgeable in the area of Director and helped me create my first movie. L. talked with me about the projects and shared some of the things she learned about graphic converter and StorySpace. M. explained how the @VA commands work (the third time it kicked in) so that I could begin to add some other elements to my Mud that give it more depth and atmosphere.

To improve my grammar I bought Strunck and White's book *The Elements of Style*. This book gives many useful examples and will serve as a crutch while I continue to sharpen this area. I also visited the FaC Undergraduate Center for some help while revising essays for other classes as you suggested mid-semester.

In the area of technical learning, I have grown more than I imagined. Although by no means the most advanced in the class, compared to many of peers in the economic department, I am light years ahead. In my class on Technology and its Impact on Society, Dr. N. called upon me to act as a tutor on building web pages. This class helped me to feel confident when someone had a question or problem with html. Dr. N.'s url is www.****. He has procured a grant this summer to develop his class and its web pages and you may be interested in what he is doing.

I feel that this course has helped me immensely and I will continue to use and refine the skills you have taught this semester. Based on my work both in and outside of class, my growth as a student, and my improvement this semester I feel that this olr shows that I deserve an A for E330c.

G. Discussion of Small Multiples

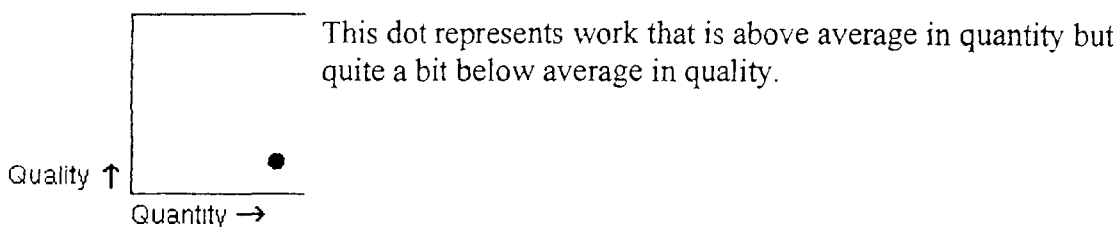
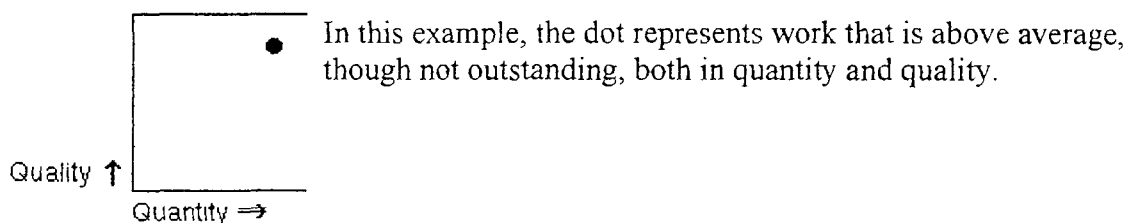
Using Small Multiples for Keeping Track of Student Work (M.A. Syverson)

When the activity, rather than the product, becomes the focus of analysis, it can be confusing to decide how to credit or even keep track of assignments. While I do not grade individual assignments, I do believe we need to keep track of whether specific assignments have been turned in and to make a rough assessment about the appropriateness of the substance and quality of the response to the task that was posed. Taking Edward Tufte's idea of small multiples and particularly his development of a comprehensive patient medical chart, I am working to develop a "vital signs" indicator for student work. It involves not a grade, but a point in a box which has two axes: quantity and quality. Each assignment's activities can be plotted in order to account for the various kinds of written and class work, fairly quickly and easily. If you do portfolio evaluations, you can also plot the evidence included in the portfolio and then separately provide comments on the work included. Note that any kind of work or medium, from final revisions of papers to oral presentations to multimedia productions or online communications can be represented by this system.

This method of tracking student work is not part of the Learning Record system, and it is not necessary to use it when using the Learning Record. It is simply a different way of accounting for students' ongoing work that can be used with any form of evaluation.

How it works:

What looks like a typical teacher's record sheet can be made much richer in information, yet easier to track across the semester or year through using each box not for a check, grade or number but for a plotted point. This is done by considering the two dimensions of the box as axes. For example, I am interested, as I quickly review students' assignments or other work, both with the work's quality and the quantity. These are the two axes I use: quality for the vertical dimension and quantity for the horizontal dimension. Here are two enlarged examples:



Example Class Record Sheet

Quality \uparrow Quantity \rightarrow

Class Work Credited for:

Page:

Assignment:	Due:	
1 Interview with classmate	1/23	14
2 A1OLR interview	1/30	15
3 Topic Proposal	1/30	16
4 Project 1 Draft	2/8	17
5 Project 1 Final	2/15	18
6 Reading Response	2/22	19
7 Project 2 Proposal	2/22	20
8		21
9		22
10		23
11		24
12		25

[illegible]

Notice that this format provides a kind of constellation or star map representing students' progress graphically as a movement across space and time. This method is surprisingly quick and in fact it is all you need to record if you are providing comments to writers on their work itself. It allows you to scan a whole row and visually track the progress of a particular student. You can also look down a column and visually track the fate of your assignment: if many of the marks are in the same low quadrant, perhaps the assignment was confusing for students, and needs more preparation to work well, or perhaps it did not work well for other reasons. The information in this format can help teachers recognize when they need to seek reasons for students' lack of success with a particular assignment. Students who tend to generate work of high quality but low quantity can be encouraged to expand their ideas further, while students who tend to generate work of high quantity but rather low quality can be encouraged to focus and direct their efforts, spending more time on developing the quality of their writing.

You may decide on a different set of terms for the axes, but the interesting thing is that you can provide, with a single dot, two kinds of information about a particular item, twice as much as a grade or check mark provides. It is easier to recognize trends at a glance, and it also eliminates the need to do complex arithmetic averaging. Is the student consistently engaging in class activities at an above average level? Did a student get off to a rocky start and then gain momentum? Did a student start losing ground after the midterm? Aren't we much more interested in answers to these questions than answers to questions such as how do you average a B+ at 40% of the grade, a C for 10%, an A- for 20%, a B for 15% and a B- for 15%?

You can track as many or as few assignments or activities as you choose to using this method. You can also add an "L" (as shown in the example) to any box to indicate that an assignment was turned in late. On the lines above the maps I briefly describe each assignment as it is due. I've used this method successfully for two years now, and I appreciate more and more its flexibility and its support for portfolio assessment.

Reference: Tufte, Edward. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. Cheshire, CT: Graphis Press, 1997.

H. Moderations Questionnaires

MIDTERM MODERATION READINGS: COMMENT FORM

Name of Writer:

Name of Readers:

1. Is the information in the Learning Record Online sufficient to make an evaluation? That is, is there enough information, and an appropriate selection of information? (Yes or No)
2. Are there clear signs of development across the five dimensions of learning we are interested in? (Yes or No)
3. Based on the quality of the activities demonstrated in the LRO (both the evidence from the work and the writer's interpretation in the midterm Learning Record), what letter grade would you attach to the portfolio?

Other comments:

MIDTERM MODERATION READINGS: COMMENT FORM

Name of Writer:

Name of Readers:

4. Is the information in the Learning Record Online sufficient to make an evaluation? That is, is there enough information, and an appropriate selection of information? (Yes or No)
5. Are there clear signs of development across the five dimensions of learning we are interested in? (Yes or No)
6. Based on the quality of the activities demonstrated in the LRO (both the evidence from the work and the writer's interpretation in the midterm Learning Record), what letter grade would you attach to the portfolio?

Other comments:

Principles Behind Good Practices in Assessment

1. Records that include evidence from homes

The 'parent conferences' – Section A1 from the PLR/LR/LRO

2. Records that include evidence from children

The language and literacy conferences with children – A2 and C2 from the main Record

3. Recording normal behaviour in favorable contexts

The Observations and Samples – diaries of observations

4. Helpful structures for recording

The Observations and Samples – writing samples

5. Records which view errors as information

The Observations and Samples reading samples

6.Regular, frequent, and systematic recording

the Observations and Samples – the Talking and Listening matrix

7. Recording in different formats and in different contexts, drawing on different points of view

The Observations and Samples and the main Record

8. Records that help to make links between different aspects of development

Section B of the main Record

9. An emphasis on positive recording

The main Record, and the Observations and Samples

10. Records that help planning and inform teaching

The main Record, and the Observations and Samples

Compiled by Myra Barrs. Ph.D.