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College

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Assessment Report: ENGL 1010

Introduction to Writing



Summary

Background

English 1010 is the largest course in the English department with an average of around 100 sections a semester. There are several types of 1010 courses: online, hybrid, Concurrent Enrollment (CE courses were not included), and traditional. During spring 2007 we ran 91 sections of 1010, 11 online and 5 technology enhanced. 25 (27%) of these sections were taught by full-time faculty, 66 (73%) by adjunct faculty.

Context

While several assessments of 1010 have occurred over the years, this is the first to include holistic blind reading of student work. In addition this assessment has dramatically increased adjunct instructor participation as both readers and participants.

Methodology

English 1010 ends with a final project comprised of a researched argument, genre translation, and self-assessment. This assessment evaluated the researched argument and self-assessment assignments. The researched argument was assessed by four individual writing traits; the self-assessment was evaluated as the fifth trait. These two assignments were read by at least two committee members with scoring discrepancies of more than two points being resolved by a third reader.

Participating Sections: 15

Readers: 9

Total number of paper sets evaluated: 225

Total traits evaluated: 1125

Results

of paper sets evaluated at Proficient or Exemplary level: 177

% of paper sets evaluated at Proficient or Exemplary level: 79%

of 3rd reads: 64

% of 3rd reads out of total traits evaluated: 6%

% of reads which were reliable: 94%

79% of our students scored in the acceptable range overall. The self-assessment trait was the lowest performing trait with 46% of students in the below average category; the second lowest was writing persuasively with 38% below average.

Recommendations

The committee recommends that future assessments continue to engage more adjunct faculty and that the assessment is set-up before the beginning of the semester with procedures communicated to all participants as early as possible.

The committee will focus adjunct training and curriculum changes on the two lowest performing traits. We believe future assessments should use this assessment as a starting place and should continue to collaborate with the Student Writing Center (SWC). To this effect, two committee members have already begun this work by surveying writing tutors and presenting a workshop to SWC writing tutors concerning self-assessment writing. The committee recommends that improving the quality of writing instruction must continue to include institutional/ departmental support and funding.

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Departmental Context

We have completed several assessments of our core writing program, English 1010 and 2010, over the last five years. The latest was in 2001 where we conducted self-assessment surveys with students, *Student Self Assessments of Learning in the College Introductory And Intermediate Writing Courses*, with the assistance of Frank Cooney in Institutional Research.

Recently there has been a renewed interest and energy in assessment stemming from SLCC's accreditation recommendations which specifically identified assessment as an area for improvement. During the 2005-6 academic year, the 2010 committee headed up our first assessment after the accreditation recommendations. The 2010 assessment informed our assessment in several ways. Most importantly we did two holistic readings of student work (see Attachment A for assignment handouts) as opposed to earlier assessments which focused on student self-assessment surveys. As with the 2010 assessment, we created five writing traits (see below) and then tallied these in order to arrive at one holistic score. Additionally, as with the 2010 assessment, the 1010 assessment used a third reader when we had a deviation of two points or more. We thank the 2010 committee for their hard work in setting up a rigorous assessment model.

However, we did make several adjustments, based on our particular assessment, and expansions to the 2010 assessment model. We will outline those here and then discuss their effectiveness in the "Recommendations" section.

Updated Methodology

- 1. Adjunct participation:** The 2010 assessment included one adjunct instructor as a reader and participant. We included two adjunct instructors as readers and participants and additionally asked nine other adjuncts to submit their student papers for evaluation.
 - 2. Writing Traits (see next page):** These were very similar to the traits used for the English 2010 assessment, except we had a separate trait for the Self-Assessment essay. As with the 2010 assessment, we aligned our traits with the English 1010 Outcome goals (see Appendix B)
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Writing Traits

1. *The student writer takes a point of view on an issue*
2. *The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.*
3. *The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.*
4. *The student writes persuasively*
5. *The student writer effectively illustrates how they adapt writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment*

3. **Descriptors:** Again these were similar but we tried to flesh out the descriptors more fully in two ways: one, we described each number score; two, we divided and named each the top two, middle, and bottom scores: Exemplary, Proficient, Below Average.

Exemplary		Proficient		Below Average	
6 Consistently exhibits the trait	5 Exhibits the trait with some lapses	4 Consistently exhibits the trait	3 Exhibits the trait with some lapses	2 Exhibits the trait sometimes	1 Does not exhibit the trait

Scoring:

6 The student's writing exhibits all of the traits nearly all of the time.

5

4 The student's writing exhibits all of the traits, but not consistently.

3

2 The student's writing exhibits some of the traits.

1

4. **Deviation of two points leading to third reads:** Rather than only applying this to the holistic score as was done in the 2010 assessment, we applied it to each individual trait score. Thus allowing us to understand more specifically the differences in scores, helping us focus more directly on each criteria so as to avoid anecdotal evidence as we attempted to interpret the data. This was explicitly informed by our knowledge of the 2010 assessment where one of the recommendations was to focus on research and dealing with sources, but this recommendation was generated on anecdotal rather than statistical evidence.

Process

The 1010 assessment was created by the 1010 committee, a group of seven English faculty members. We discussed the assessment during the summer and fall semesters leading up to the spring. Generally a document was produced at the suggestion of the committee by the 1010 committee chair and then sent out for feedback and eventual approval. Even though we met in-person several times to discuss the assessment, much of the actual detailed discussion and review was conducted over email.

First, nine sections of 1010 were randomly selected from all of the major campuses. These adjuncts were then sent an email one month into spring semester (see Appendix C) describing the assessment project and asking them to participate. Also, two additional adjunct instructors were asked to be readers. Each of the nine readers, seven full-time and two part-time, submitted papers from the designated course. Four weeks before the student papers were due, a follow up email was sent out (see Appendix C).

Student papers were turned into the department secretary, Christine Young, on April 26th who then assigned each set of papers a number between 1 and 18 and compiled a list of all the instructors who did actually turn in their papers. Our plan was to maintain as much confidentiality as possible. Upon completion instructors involved with the project can access their scores through Christine Young and will be given a letter (see Appendix D) which contains specific data for their section. of the assessment.

On April 27th, the Friday after the last day of classes, we met from 8 till 3:30 to read papers. We held a norming session to begin the session and about half way through at noon. During these norming sessions we read student papers from other sections or semesters of 1010. When there was a deviation of two or more we stopped to discuss the particular criteria. Some sets of papers were not scored by the end of the day, so several readers took home papers and then returned them the new week.

In order to maintain consistency, we had a third reader evaluate the essay when the first two readers had a deviation of two or more points. Most of the third reads were completed on April 30th by Brittany Stephenson, Ron Christiansen, and Sue Briggs. The last section of rereads was completed at the end of the week by Brittany.

Results

As discussed under the “Methodology” section, the assessment evaluated all 5 traits with a score between 1 and 6 (a score of 0 was given in a few instances where the self assessment essay was missing). After each trait was assigned a score, the scores were then added together to create an overall, or total score for the paper, with 30 being the highest score possible.

Each paper received two reads, and the scores for each trait were then combined into a total paper and trait score. In the cases where a third read was needed, the third reader score was kept and combined to the original score to which it was closest, with the other score being thrown out. The score ranges for each individual trait and overall paper are as follows:

Traits

Below Average 0-5	Proficient 6-8	Exemplary 9-12
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Total

Below Average 0-25	Proficient 26-44	Exemplary 45-60
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There were a total of 225 papers scored. Each paper was scored in 5 traits, for a total of 1125 traits scored.

The performance breakdown for the papers is as follows:

	Below Average	Proficient	Exemplary
Trait 1 <i>The student writer takes a point of view on an issue.</i>	21%	42%	37%
Trait 2 <i>The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.</i>	28%	44%	28%
Trait 3 <i>The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.</i>	31%	52%	17%
Trait 4 <i>The student writes persuasively</i>	38%	47%	15%
Trait 5 <i>The student writer effectively illustrates how they adapt writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment</i>	46%	38%	16%
Total <i>Sum of all traits.</i>	21%	66%	13%

Papers scoring in the proficient and exemplary categories are considered to have reached an acceptable level of performance in English 1010. The percentage of papers reaching the level of acceptability (proficient + exemplary) within each trait are as follows:

Trait 1 <i>The student writer takes a point of view on an issue.</i>	79%
Trait 2 <i>The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.</i>	72%
Trait 3 <i>The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.</i>	69%
Trait 4 <i>The student writes persuasively</i>	62%
Trait 5 <i>The student writer effectively illustrates how they adapt writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment</i>	54%
Total <i>Sum of all traits.</i>	79%

Results: Online Sections

Two of the fifteen sections participating in the assessment project were fully online sections. Online sections follow the same curriculum as traditional sections of English 1010, but with some adjustment to assignments, readings, and activities to accommodate for the online mode of instruction. Online English 1010 is structured as a 3 day a week class, in which students and instructors meet online in a real time chat on day 1 to discuss readings, assignments, and course concepts. Days 2 and 3 of the online schedule generally consist of students posting various assignments, peer reviews, and class discussions to an asynchronous discussion board. The online English teaching team chose to use the opportunity of the English 1010 assessment to measure the performance of online English courses in relationship to the overall English 1010 program. The two sections of online English scored as well as or better than the overall average results in each trait of the assessment.

Percentage of papers scoring at an acceptable (proficient + exemplary) level:

	Trait 1	Trait 2	Trait 3	Trait 4	Trait 5	Total
Assessment average (of 225 papers)	79%	72%	69%	62%	54%	79%
Online sections (of 26 papers)	88%	85%	81%	77%	77%	85%

We conclude, therefore, that online sections of English 1010 are reaching the outcomes of English 1010 as effectively as traditional on campus sections.

Interpretation of Data

As discussed the self-assessment trait was the lowest trait with 36% of students scoring in the below average category which is 8% higher than the next lowest trait, writing persuasively (28%). The overall average of the below average trait is 21%. Clearly working to improve department-wide understanding and teaching of this trait will be a focus of the coming year.

Still, upon further analysis, the numbers begin to tell a more detailed story. At first we assumed the low performance of self-assessment writing was due to poor teaching and/or understanding across all sections. But the numbers tell a different story. Two sections scored particularly low with 93% and 91% of the students scoring in the below average category. These are striking anomalies in the data as no other trait scored in the 90th percentile in any category and the next highest below average percentile in any category was 75%. When we took out these two sections the overall percentage is 38%, the same percentage for below average as our next lowest trait, writes persuasively. Therefore the overall problem might be less an issue of overall understanding and teaching of self-assessment writing and more an issue of individual buy-in to the importance of self-assessment writing. The implications of this will be discussed below under recommendations.

Recommendations and Conclusions

English 1010 Specific: Self-Assessment Writing (SAW)

As the highest below average trait, SAW will be a focus for the 1010 Committee during this next academic year. We will work on enhancing SAW in the following ways:

- The departmental course schedule will include several more specific references and activities to SAW
- Some of these activities will utilize SAW in a way to emphasize its importance outside the completion of the specific self-assessment papers required for the course
- Students will be encouraged to engage in self-assessment writing throughout the writing process and through a variety of SAW genres (lists, letters, email, webs or clusters)
- One adjunct training will be utilized to discuss and practice responding to SAW

In addition, because of the anomalous data discussed above, we will not only attempt to improve SAW instruction across the department in, but will also focus our efforts on building an explicit rationale:

- A clearer rationale for including SAW will be included in adjunct materials on our 1010 website and will be discussed with adjuncts during their first orientation

Lastly we have already begun work to collaborate with the Student Writing Center to improve the emphasis and individual instruction on SAW. On July 18th, 2007 a SWC workshop and survey was conducted with writing tutors where the following were instituted to improve SAW writing:

- A new form for writing tutors which specifically asks tutors to remind students that SAW is the very subject of writing tutor sessions
- A 1010 committee discussion of the feedback received from writing tutors both concerning their experience tutoring students working on SAW and their own experiences doing self-assessment writing in our courses

Online Sections

The online English 1010 team (consisting of one full time instructor and 6 adjunct instructors) will be reviewing the results of the assessment project during the 2007-2008 academic year and will focus on issues of instructional design and professional development for improved student performance in online English 1010.

Process: Programs

We would suggest that future course assessments first utilize the data and recommendations in our first two assessments, but also utilize other sources of information like the Writing Center in determining what to assess. We recommend that future assessment work be more closely linked with the work, data, and experience of our writing tutors. We also believe that our assessment work should influence departmental funding of projects and decisions made by the Writing Program Committee.

Process: Readers

Even though we decided that doing our reading on the last week of classes was necessary so that we would all be able to meet, it turned out to be more difficult than we expected. Emotionally it was taxing to read other instructor's student papers while each of us had stacks of papers to read for our own courses. Also, some wondered whether it was necessary to do two norming sessions. Not doing two norming sessions would allow readers to meet in the morning norm and then return evaluated papers in a day or two. Our recommendation would be to keep intact two norming sessions with two changes: plan on readers assessing papers in their office or at other locales and count on everyone taking papers with them after the second norming session at lunch. Even though we thought we had clearly agreed on what constituted effective writing pertaining to each criteria, we still had some significant discrepancies in our second norming session.

Process: Adjunct Participation

To our knowledge, our assessment was the first to solicit papers from multiple adjunct sections. This proved more difficult than expected. First, the 1010 Course Leader, Ron Christiansen, had a difficult time getting adjuncts to return his emails and calls. In part this is because the sections were randomly selected rather than selecting sections from adjuncts we personally knew or who expressed an interest in the project. Ron went through approximately 14 adjuncts before he was able to get nine to commit to turning in their student papers. Still, one adjunct sent the papers through the campus mail which did not reach us in time and one did not send them at all.

Additionally, after addressing the logistical issues, several instructors were still unsure if their student papers would work for the assessment because they had deviated so far from the course schedule and goals. This was apparent in the email exchanges between Ron and several adjuncts and even more apparent in some of the papers we received. For example, we had one set of group papers (which we did decide to include), a set of in-class hand written self-assessment papers, and set of research papers that were generally 1-2 pages long, constituting a response to one article rather than a research argument which we didn't include. These inconsistencies speak to the difficulties of conducting a course assessment in an environment where there are few opportunities for adjunct faculty to become invested in the department's culture and specific course goals. And given that many of our adjunct faculty are compelled, because of the low wages and no benefits, to take on several teaching jobs in order to make a decent living.

Even with these problems, the committee strongly believes that adjunct participation is a key was to create buy-in and investment in our program. Also, adjunct participation helped us to create a realistic assessment which was forced to deal with the realities of instruction. Several adjuncts who participated as readers or submitted their student work have expressed appreciation for the process and interest in future assessment.

Final Project: Argument and Genre Translation Sequence

These assignments will focus on the researched argument and the genre translation. Here, you will continue to expand, refine, and/ or refocus your scene/ issue through research and a well fashioned argument and an appropriate (depending on your context and who has the ability to make changes) public genre. The final project will be the culmination of your exploration of a particular scene and your response to that scene. As such you will want to think carefully about how and why you are presenting your argument in a particular way, something you will explicitly explain in your self-reflective essay.

In order to support the process of generating your researched argument and genre translation, we will complete the following activities and writing assignments:

- Three research logs (see pp. 170-71 for a student example) which will help you keep track of the research you do
- A Multiple Sides assignment from pt 6/ ch3 which builds on the principles of believing and doubting discussed earlier in the semester
- Discussion of Pt 6/ ch3 concerning visual rhetoric which will allow you to explore “all available means of persuasion” for your final project
- Discussion and activity on using, citing, and evaluating sources
- One typed peer review (completed through email)
- One “Small Group Workshops” where you will type reviews for each member of your peer review group and meet in small groups with the instructor; substantial revision should occur after these sessions
- Drafting a public genre translation which will assert the same argument as your researched argument but will target a particular audience through a specific public genre
- Lastly, a self-reflective essay which will be similar to, but more comprehensive than, the Strong Response self-reflective. Basically this a rhetorical analysis of your own writing process and decision-making

Required for final project: Due the last day of class in a manila folder

- Final draft of Researched Argument
- Final draft Public Genre Translation
- Final draft Self-Reflective
- Teacher Review of your paper from the small group workshops
- Optional: Additional reviews and/or documents you wish to include that you specifically discuss in your Self-Reflective

Self-Assessment or Self-Reflective Letter

1. This letter doesn't have rigid design or content requirements. This is intentional as I want you to see the letter as YOUR opportunity to say what will not be apparent in your researched argument or your final project. That is I want you to feel comfortable discussing issues about your writing and progress that YOU feel will help build the rhetorical appeal (logos, pathos, ethos) of your final project and writing. It is, in the end, what the title indicates: a self assessment of your work and progress in the course.
2. Still I can give you some guidance. You might consider the following:
 - a. What issues have you wrestled with in your writing? How did you work to clarify them through peer review, reading the text, class discussion/lectures and your own writing process?
 - b. Would you now define “good” writing in the same way that you did at the beginning of the course? How has your writing, peer reviews, and discussions of the text impacted your view of good writing?
 - c. How have the concepts of genre and visual rhetoric impacted your research and/or your writing?
 - d. How have you worked through the peer feedback you have received? Have you received contradictory advice? If so how did you handle it?
 - e. What kind of “rhetorical” research have you done on the scene? How has this knowledge impacted how you have made your argument in your research paper and your public genre? How have you tried to work through these particular issues and how have peer reviews, class discussions, and the text informed this work?
 - f. If you have included extra documents (beyond those required), why have you included them? Remember MORE isn't always better—your final project should be rhetorically constructed and organized.
 - g. What else do you want me (the final project reader) to know about you as a writer? You might think about this in terms of logos, ethos, and pathos; that is what do you want me to know in order to strengthen the logos, pathos, and ethos of your final project? Note that merely asserting that you are a much better writer will NOT build your ethos or credibility or grade. As with the claims in your essays you will need to demonstrate/prove what you have learned. Also, note that it is not required that you have made massive improvements—one can write well for this class and engage with the process and text without necessarily making huge improvements in their writing.

Appendix A: English 1010 Assignment Handouts—Genre Translation

Genre Translation:

First do the drafting activity on p. 685 where you answer questions about the genre you are going to write (this is assignment #14). These questions will continue to be important as you create your genre translation. Let me detail some issues to consider as you create a draft of your public genre and then revise it for our small group sessions. Next, you will answer the questions for drafting on p. 693 and pp. 693 & 699 (Assignment #22). These questions will help deepen your understanding of the scene, your audience, and purpose. Lastly, you will bring a draft of your public genre for Week 15 (Assignment #25).

The basics—translate the argument you are making in your research paper into a public genre (letter to the editor, complaint letter, pamphlet, flyer, proposal, website, PowerPoint, etc). You should choose a genre based on your analysis of the scene (see part 7/ ch 1) and the genre assignments, i.e., based on the kind of public genre you think will have an impact on your issue at this time.

Studying the public genre—you'll want to survey the public genre you choose to see how people make arguments with this particular genre. For example, if you choose to write a letter, read the letters to the editor, see the complaint letters starting on p. 643, and note the strategies you have used or have been used in your personal letters. What's important here is the genre NOT the subject matter (what it's about). Another example would be a brochure; if you choose this genre, check out all kinds of brochures (doctors office, on campus, at work) to see how they are constructed, how they use language, how they combine the visual with the written, etc. See p. 671-2 for a detailed set of questions for genre analysis.

Writing the genre—now you have a sense of the overall genre you chose, you'll want to start thinking specifically about how the genre circulates in the particular scene you have chosen. Have you run across examples of the genre you chose which discuss your issue? If so, how will your genre be similar or different than these and why? That is how will your genre stake out an area from which to speak and communicate to a particular audience? Consider part 7/ ch 3 as you write your public genre, especially the questions on pp. 685, 693, 699, and 717. Pages 720-1 and the Envision chapters will help you think about the visual elements of your arguments—these will be vital for certain genres like a pamphlet, PowerPoint, flyer, website).

English 1010 Outcome Goals

#1 Rhetorical Strategies, including adapting to differences in purpose, audience and genre

#2 Critical Thinking Processes, including summary, analysis, synthesis, and argumentation

#3 Composing Processes such as invention, drafting, revision, editing, peer feedback, and self-assessment

#4 Conventions of Writing, especially the conventions of citing multiple texts and incorporating them into one's own writing

English 1010 assessment

During the spring semester of 2007, the 1010 committee will complete a programmatic assessment of English 1010. This assessment is NOT concerned with assessing individual courses or instructors; rather the intent is to evaluate how our curriculum and overall program are addressing our outcome goals. This move to assess our outcome goals is tied to the college-wide focus on assessment.

The 1010 assessment will be similar to the English 2010 assessment completed during the spring 2006 semester. As such we will focus on the final two pieces of writing in English 1010, the final argument essay and self-assessment assignment, and we will evaluate the student writing based on a short list of writing traits.

On April 27th a small group of faculty will meet to evaluate the writing collected from 18 sections of English 1010. Using the writing traits listed below, we will do two blind readings of both writing assignments. A third reading will be used if there is a two points or higher discrepancy in the evaluation

Writing Traits Assessed: (revised from the 2010 assessment)

1. The student writer takes a point of view on an issue
2. The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.
3. The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.
4. The student writer illustrates how he/she adapts writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment
5. The student writes persuasively

Participants/Readers: Seven English 1010 committee members and two adjunct instructors.

Sections: 18 will participate (one from each of those who participate and nine randomly selected sections)

Appendix D: Email #2 to Participants—Follow-up

1010 Assessment Participants,

Below I have outlined the procedure for collecting papers and the criteria which will be used for the assessment. If there are any problems associated with the process or criteria please contact me ASAP by replying to this email or by phone: 682.6169

PROCEDURE

1. Email a disclosure to students assuring them that this assessment will not impact their standing in the course. Here's what I would suggest:

Our English 1010 section has been selected to participate in an assessment project. This project is an assessment of SLCC's English 1010 program rather than of this course or individual students. The project will require that each of you turn in two copies of your researched argument and self-assessment—one with your name on and one with no identifying information concerning you or the course. Please turn these in on _____ (no later than Thursday, April 26th). Your work will remain anonymous throughout the process.

2. Make sure students understand (as explained above) that they need to turn in TWO copies of both their researched argument and self-assessment essays, one which contains no identifying information concerning the course or writer.
3. Drop off these papers (the ones with no identifying information) to Christine Young in the English Department (AD 241) no later than 3:30 pm on Thursday April 26th. The English office will serve as the clearinghouse for the papers and assessment. Christine will assign each bundle (section) of papers a random number. After the assessment, if you wish, you can find out the average score your section received.

WRITING TRAITS

1. *The student writer takes a point of view on an issue*
2. *The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.*
3. *The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.*
4. *The student writes persuasively*
5. *The student writer effectively illustrates how they adapt writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment*

Appendix E: Email #3 to Participants—Results

Dear Section X Instructor,

Thank you for your participation in and support of the 2007 English 1010 assessment project. Your valued participation in this assessment has helped provide the English Dept. with highly beneficial data regarding the English 1010 program. Below you will find information regarding the assessment as a whole as well as your specific section. You will also want to read the English 1010 2007 Assessment Report to help you contextualize and interpret the numbers for your section. We hope you find the feedback to be a useful tool in your professional growth and development. If you have any questions please contact Ron Christiansen (957-4321) or Brittany Stephenson (957-4751).

WRITING TRAITS

1. *The student writer takes a point of view on an issue*
2. *The student writer uses and documents sources appropriately for the writing task.*
3. *The student writer can analyze effectively, using appropriate evidence.*
4. *The student writes persuasively*
5. *The student writer effectively illustrates how they adapt writing to address particular situations in written self-assessment*

The following represents the percentages by trait of the 225 total papers read:

	Below Average	Proficient	Exemplary
Trait 1	21%	42%	37%
Trait 2	28%	44%	28%
Trait 3	31%	52%	17%
Trait 4	38%	47%	15%
Trait 5	46%	38%	16%
Total	21%	66%	13%

The following represents the percentages by trait of the 14 papers in your section:

	Below Average	Proficient	Exemplary
Trait 1	7%	28%	65%
Trait 2	28%	36%	36%
Trait 3	21%	50%	28%
Trait 4	21%	43%	36%
Trait 5	14%	50%	36%
Total	21%	50%	28%

