
ASSESSING TRANSFER STUDENTS' READINESS FOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: THE WRITING CENTER'S ROLE

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This portion of the session reported on the Writing Center's involvement in writing assessment at Texas Christian University (TCU). TCU has recently implemented a Writing Across the Curriculum program, at the same time changing the core curriculum to require a freshman and a sophomore writing course instead of two freshman courses. TCU provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate that they have mastered the skills necessary to do well in a writing-intensive course, thus necessitating assessment of the writing skills of all students who wish to transfer credit for the second freshman course taken at another school. The staff of the Writing Center make this evaluation and they have developed a two-stage procedure that is flexible enough to be adapted to analogous situations, such as an English department exit

exam that would indicate readiness for writing-intensive courses in other disciplines.

To demonstrate their readiness for these other courses at TCU, students present a portfolio of graded work and an essay written under supervision. Using a checklist, the Writing Center staff members indicate whether the portfolio demonstrates training in argumentative researched writing and displays editing skills at the C level described in the English Department's printed grading standards. The Department allows transfer students two days to prepare to write the supervised essay. They are given two or three brief articles that present opposing views on the same subject and are asked to read them carefully; then, in a four-hour session, they write an essay in response to a question drawn from this reading. The resulting essays demonstrate a student's level of skill in constructing and supporting arguments, as well as in summarizing, quoting, and paraphrasing. Once again, faculty use a rubric to evaluate the essays quickly. Students who fail either level of portfolio evaluation or the essay must take the sophomore composition course.