

# CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

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## INSTITUTION

Written Communication

### **Definition of Competency:**

Competent writing should provide evidence of correct style; few errors in mechanics (spelling, presentation, capitalization, syntax); appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure and variety; well-structured, relevant content related by transitions and supported by a variety of sources; clarity of thought.

### **Standards for Competency:**

Writing samples were evaluated on the basis of a five-point scale (superior = 4, above average = 3, average = 2, below average = 1, and failing = 0) on each of four writing traits: content, organization, style, and conventions.

Overall competency for a student is demonstrated by an average score of 2 across all writing traits, connoting that the student is judged as an average writer or better by writing experts.

### **Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence of Competency:**

A true pre-post design was conducted to determine the degree to which students' writing skills improved. For 71 students, a writing sample was collected in their freshman introductory writing course in fall 2002 and another sample taken in a writing-intensive course in their junior year (academic year 2004-2005). Several English faculty (i.e., writing experts) rated these samples using a rubric (attached). An individual student's pre- and post-writing samples were evaluated by the same faculty member. Students tended to give good effort because their performances on these presentations also counted toward class grades.

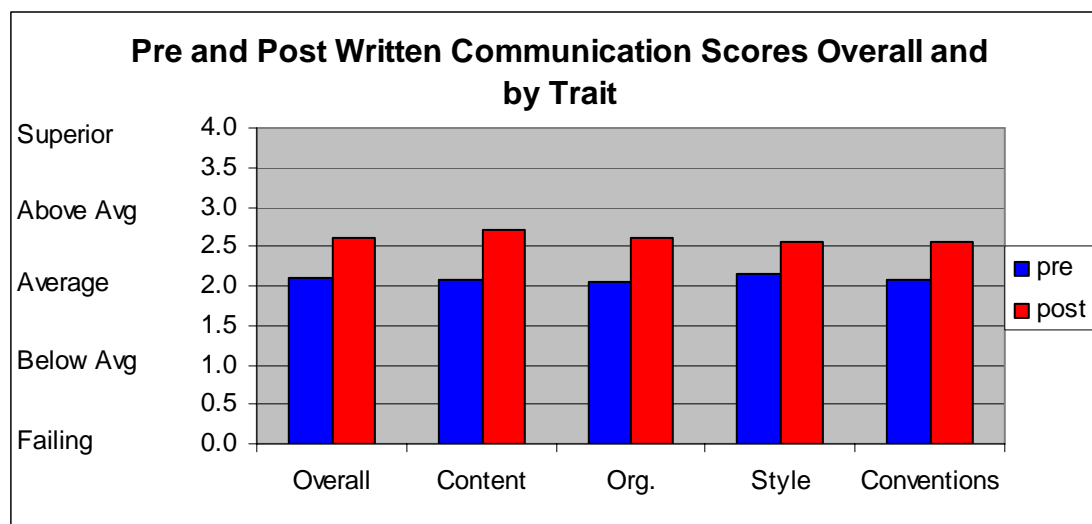
Descriptive statistics for each of the four traits represented by the rubric were calculated. In addition, an overall score was calculated by averaging the trait scores together. To give readers full context, results of the comparisons of the pre and post scores are presented in two ways: (1) the means of each trait and the overall score using dependent t-tests and (2) the percentage of students evaluated as competent (i.e., receiving a 2 overall score or better).

## Pre and Post Written Communication Scores Overall and by Trait

|              | Pre-Scores (n = 71) | Post-Scores (n = 71) | Mean Difference |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Overall      | 2.1                 | 2.6                  | 0.5             |
| Content      | 2.1                 | 2.7                  | 0.6*            |
| Organization | 2.0                 | 2.6                  | 0.6*            |
| Style        | 2.2                 | 2.5                  | 0.3*            |
| Conventions  | 2.1                 | 2.6                  | 0.5*            |

\*  $p < .0001$

Note: 4 = superior, 3 = above average, 2 = average, 1 = below average, 0 = failing



## Competency of Students on Written Communication as Freshmen and as Juniors

|                       | As Freshmen (n = 71) | As Juniors (n = 71) | Difference    |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| % Competent or Better | 59%                  | 86%                 | 27%age points |

### **Summary:** *(Provide analysis of results)*

The results of the assessment indicate that students as juniors (post) performed significantly better than they did as freshmen (pre) in written communication as evidenced by improvements on all traits: content, organization, style, and conventions. Eighty-six percent (86%) of juniors were evaluated as competent or better compared to only (59%) of those same students when they were freshmen. Regarding the traits, students on average made a half point gain or better in content, organization, and conventions indicating that the typical student, from his/her freshman to junior year, progressed on a continuum from being an average writer to closer to being an above average writer in those areas. Students did make a gain in style, but to a lesser extent (0.3 points). In sum, the results of this assessment indicate that as students progress through their education at CNU, their writing improves in all areas.

## Attachment: Written Communication Rubric

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one number in each section below.

4-Superior (A) 3-Above Average (B) 2-Average (C) 1-Below Average (D) 0-Failing (F)

### Content

Clear, interesting thesis that reflects contradictions and tensions

Demonstrates comprehension in the analysis

Uses appropriate evidence, sources, and support to avoid generalizations (if germane to original assignment)

Displays appropriate discursive conventions for the genre and assignment (e.g., academic discourse, discipline specific conventions)

4

3

2

1

0

### Organization/Structure

Introduces content with a sense of purpose and focus

Establishes and reinforces a thesis

Builds orderly, developed paragraphs with coherent, logical transitions

Concludes with a sense of focus and meaning

4

3

2

1

0

### Style

Draws from a strong and complex vocabulary

Displays varied sentence patterns

Exhibits deliberate clarity and concision

4

3

2

1

0

### Grammar, Punctuation, and Mechanics

Demonstrates understanding of grammatical conventions (sentence fragments, tense)

Uses conventional punctuation correctly (comma use, semi-colon, colon, possessive)

Spells correctly

4

3

2

1

0