

Institutional Effectiveness Audit of Written Communication: 2018-2019

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Institutional Effectiveness Audit of Written Communication: 2018-2019

Executive Summary

This section summarizes key findings from the Office of Academic Assessment's 2018-2019 *Written Communication Core Learning Outcome Audit*. The audit considers the data gathered from all programs and disciplines performing written communication assessments. This data is used in the college-wide assessment process and as the evidence of student learning in the area of written communication. *VCCS General Education Policy (5.0.2)* defines written communication (WC) as, "the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience."

1. Submission and Quality of Written Communication Assessments.
 - 33 educational programs and standalone certificates and 11 disciplines without degrees submitted written communication assessments in 2018-2019.
 - Based on the rubric used by the Office of Academic Assessment, the overall quality of 2018-2019 written communication assessment reports written by programs and disciplines was excellent. On average, 92 percent of programs and disciplines reached the meeting expectations scoring range (90-100 percent).
2. Course Embedded Written Communication Assessments.
 - Approximately 18 percent of educational programs and disciplines used existing student learning outcomes to operationalize written communication.
 - 4,837 NOVA students, across modalities, took part in the assessment process. The 2018-2019 assessment included 10,292 students. This is an increase of 3,809 students from the year before.
3. Measuring Student Achievement in Written Communication.
 - 83 percent of programs' and disciplines' rubrics and 71 percent of exams clearly align with the VCCS definition of written communication.
 - Approximately 22 percent of questions or items on a rubric used to operationalize written communication were forms of explanation or description. Writing mechanics, organization and structure, conceptual understanding, and supporting materials were each used between 13 and 15 percent of the time.
4. Actions to Improve Student Learning.
 - Disciplines and programs created 311 actions to improve written communication assessment and student learning.
 - 44 percent of the actions by *programs* were in the area of curricular changes.
 - 60 percent of the actions taken by *disciplines* focused on assessment improvements.
5. Written Communication Working Group Recommendations
 - Include core learning outcome infographics on relevant Canvas course sites.
 - Post written communication related assessment exam questions or prompts, rubrics, and sample innovative assignments on Canvas.

Introduction

The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) define general education as a core set of knowledge, abilities, and skills essential to the undergraduate curriculum to optimize student success for work and life. The six general education content areas prescribed by the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) for all system colleges to include in their curriculum are Civic Engagement, Critical thinking, Professional Readiness, Quantitative Literacy, Scientific Literacy, and Written Communication. At NOVA, these crucial skills and knowledge are called Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs), and they are developed in general education courses, and practiced and honed in individual fields of study. The teaching and assessment of these skills and knowledge are dispersed across the curriculum. Educational degree programs, select certificates, and disciplines without degrees at NOVA assess general education core learning competencies.

This report examines how well NOVA students achieve the Written Communication General Education Core Competency. *VCCS General Education Policy (5.0.2)* defines Written Communication (WC) as, “the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience.” Learning and applying appropriate writing habits happens across programs and disciplines at NOVA. Writing is a basic form of communication in the modern world. Students learn to write appropriate emails, reports, research summaries and papers. They learn to write lab reports and project management documents. NOVA assesses WC across the curriculum.

Core learning outcomes assessment operates on a three-year cycle implemented to assess NOVA’s six core learning outcomes: two each year (Table 1).¹ The goal is determining students’ level of mastery of the general education competencies. Each year, programs and disciplines assess one of two scheduled CLOs for college-wide reporting.² The College initiated the three-year assessment cycle in 2017-2018. Critical thinking and quantitative literacy were the first two CLOs assessed. Civic engagement and written communication were assessed in 2018-2019.³

Table 1: Core Learning Outcome Assessment Schedule 2017-2018 to 2022-2023

Core Learning Outcome	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023
Assessment Phase →	Complete	Complete	Data Collection	Preparing	Not Started	Not Started
Civic Engagement		X			X	
Critical Thinking	X			X		
Professional Readiness			X			X
Quantitative Literacy	X			X		
Scientific Literacy			X			X
Written Communication		X			X	

Prior to 2017-2018, Virginia Community College System (VCCS) required NOVA to assess General Education Core Competencies using standardized assessment measures chosen by the VCCS. NOVA implemented course embedded assessment, a direct measure using students’ coursework, in 2017-2018. This decision was based on recommendations from NOVA’s Ad Hoc Committee on General Education Assessment established in Spring 2016 and

¹ The VCCS requires that all general education competencies are assessed twice in a six-year period.

² Programs and disciplines can, and do, assess CLOs beyond the two required for the college. They assess other CLOs for the multi-disciplinary degrees and/or for their own purposes.

³ Information on the Civic Engagement assessment may be found in the Institutional Effectiveness Audit of Civic Engagement.

the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) *Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education* adopted in July 2017.

Each year, educational programs, standalone certificates, and disciplines use a report template to discuss four broad areas of their assessment process: the operationalization of the learning outcome they assessed; the assessment method; the assessment results; and how the results will be used to improve student learning and the assessment process (Table 2).

Table 2: Reporting Areas for Annual Planning and Evaluation Report

SLOs, CLOs, Program Goals	Assessment Methods	Assessment Results	Use of Results
<i>What did we assess?</i>	<i>How did we assess? Who was assessed?</i>	<i>When did we assess? What were the results? Have results improved over time? What areas need improvement?</i>	<i>What have we been doing to improve student learning? What are we doing (or will we do) to improve student learning based on the results of the assessment?</i>

This *Institutional Effectiveness Audit of Written Communication: 2018-2019 Report* describes and analyzes the assessment reports provided to the Office of Academic Assessment by NOVA’s educational programs, select certificates, and disciplines without degrees. It is divided into 5 sections:

- Section I discusses educational programs’ and disciplines’ participation in the 2018-2019 written communication assessment and the quality of assessment reporting;
- Section II reviews examples of how educational programs, standalone certificates, and disciplines operationalized written communication and analyzes the impact of sample sizes;
- Section III describes how programs and disciplines met achievement targets;
- Section IV highlights the changes made in assessment and student learning and;
- Section V focuses on changes recommended by the Office of Academic Assessment and the Written Communication Working Group, comprised of faculty and college staff, to improve the next institutional assessment of written communication.

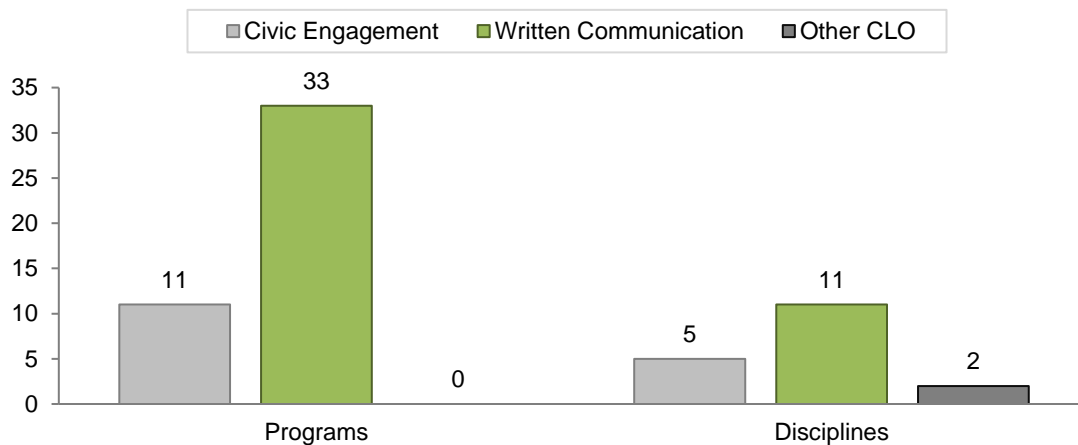
Section I: Submission and Quality of Written Communication Assessments

A. Submission of Reports

In 2018-2019, 33 educational programs and 11 disciplines without degrees assessed written communication (Figure 1). Participation was not limited to the programs and disciplines involved in the General Education curriculum at NOVA. All college bound programs/disciplines, trade programs/disciplines, and the Medical Education Campus participated in the assessment of written communication. The compiled *Written Communication Core Learning Competency Assessment Report: 2018-2019* containing these assessment documents can be found on the Office of Academic Assessment's webpage.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of programs and disciplines assessing civic engagement and written communication in 2018-2019. Two disciplines conducted additional CLO assessments for the multidisciplinary degrees. For more information about the civic engagement assessment, see the *Civic Engagement Core Learning Competency Assessment Report: 2018-2019*.

Figure 1. Number of Programs and Disciplines Submitting Core Learning Outcomes Assessments: 2018-2019



B. Quality of Assessment Reporting by Programs and Disciplines

The Office of Academic Assessment evaluates the quality of educational programs' and disciplines' annual assessment reports, using a rubric to score each section of their reports on the following topics: (1) the operationalization of the core learning outcome, (2) evaluation of their methods, (3) the results, and (4) their uses of their results. The final scores for the programs' and disciplines' reporting falls into one of four performance levels: meeting expectations; mostly meeting expectations; partially meeting expectations; and not meeting expectations (Table 3).

Table 3. Quality of Reporting in the APER: Rubric Scale

Score on Rubric	Color	Performance Level
90%-100%	Dark Green	Meeting expectations
80-89%	Light Green	Mostly meeting expectations
70%-79%	Yellow	Partially meeting expectations
Below 70%	Red	Not meeting expectations

During the 2018-2019 assessments, programs and disciplines scored in the top two performance levels on their Written Communication Assessment Reports, meeting expectations and mostly meeting expectations, as displayed in Table 4. These numbers indicate a high level of success in this second year of CLO assessment at NOVA as well as a commitment to useful data collection, analysis, and subsequently, improving the assessment culture.

Table 4. Written Communication Assessment Rubric Results: 2018-2019

	Educational Programs	Disciplines Without Degrees	Programs and Disciplines
CLO Criteria	94.3%	100.0%	95.4%
Evaluation Methods	89.8%	93.5%	90.5%
Results	93.6%	93.5%	93.5%
Use of Results	85.6%	87.8%	86.1%
TOTAL	90.8%	93.7%	91.4%

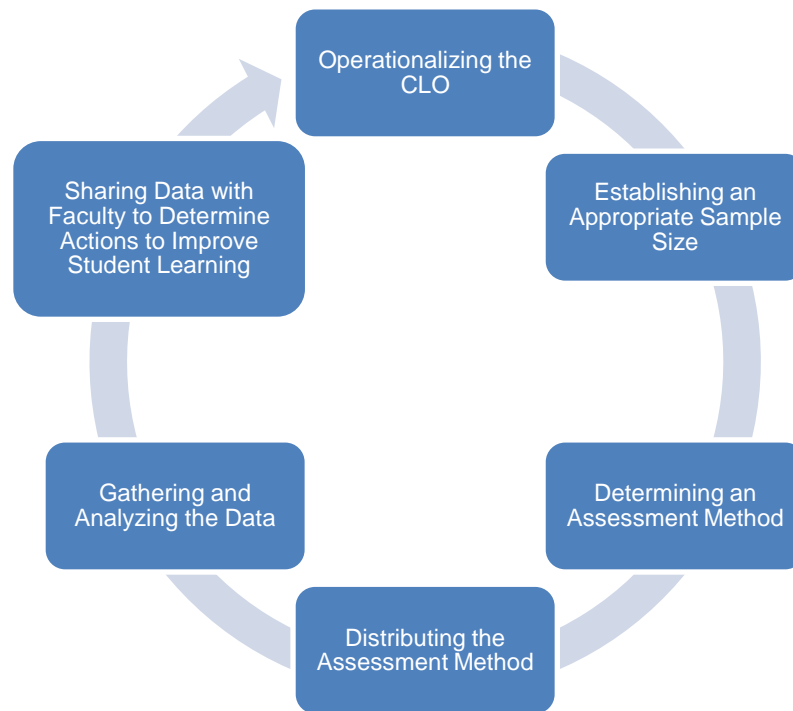
After disaggregating the scores by educational programs and disciplines, the scores strongly suggest both programs and disciplines are effectively working towards a strong assessment and report of student learning at the CLO level. Table 4 shows both programs and disciplines are still having trouble reflecting on the results and communicating areas they plan on improving for the next assessment year, (the Uses of Results section). It is worth noting that when the Office of Academic Assessment reads through these reports, there is a general understanding that programs and disciplines may be doing more than they report. A potential reason for unreported changes and actions could be programs and disciplines may not realize the actions they take are worth writing down. The Office of Academic Assessment plans to emphasize the Use of Results column in the reports to increase understanding of what is expected and improve rubric scores in the next assessment year.

Section II: Course Embedded Assessments

Examining core learning outcomes using course embedded assessment relies on educational programs' and disciplines' ability to align the VCCS definitions of the core learning outcomes with an appropriate assignment and course, and subsequently, identifying how to operationalize the CLO. Some programs use existing program SLOs to assess the core learning outcome in question (Figure 2). Faculty consult their program's curriculum map, which indicates which courses best address the SLOs and CLOs being assessed in a given year, the method of assessment, and the level of proficiency (the curriculum map indicates the level to which each SLO/CLO is addressed in the courses in the curriculum: introduced, practiced, and mastered). After determining which course most closely aligns with the CLO being assessed, faculty operationalize the CLO so it best reflects the skills or abilities expected in the selected course(s).

An effective CLO assessment cycle includes: operationalizing the CLO; establishing an appropriate sample size across courses and modalities (i.e., on campus, online, hybrid, or off-site dual enrollment); determining the assessment method; distributing the assessment to faculty teaching the selected course sections; gathering and analyzing data; making decisions about actions to take to improve student learning based on the assessment results; writing the report; and disseminating this information to the program/discipline faculty. To implement this cycle of assessment, discipline Chairs and SLO Leads rely on their full-time and part-time faculty, provosts, deans, and other administrators (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Assessment Process Cycle



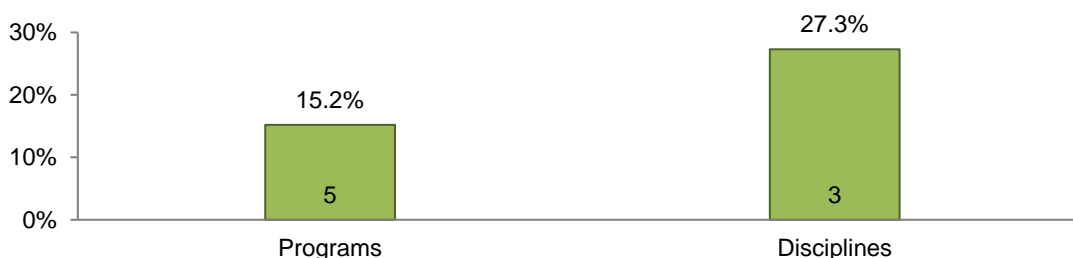
A. Operationalizing Written Communication

Programs and disciplines use the VCCS definition of the CLO as a starting point, then operationalize it to best fit the skills and competencies taught in the program/discipline. Programs and disciplines can consult with the Office of Academic Assessment to ensure that the operational outcomes appropriately align with the VCCS definitions (see Appendix B, Tables A and B). Example of how programs operationalized written communication in 2018-2019:

1. Students will communicate effectively in historical writing by developing a thesis, using supporting evidence, and utilizing proper writing mechanics. – **History, 100-level course**
2. Students will be able to organize the appropriate factual content in a clear essay that relates to other material in the class and their experience. – **Philosophy, 100-level course**
3. Students will be able to describe the various theories related to the development of leadership skills, motivation techniques, teamwork, and effective communication. – **Business Administration, SLO, 100-level course**
4. Demonstration of ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in written communication for laboratory professionals. – **Medical Lab Technology, 200-level course**
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate an interpreting situation, choose the appropriate language/ communication method, and manage the environment by writing responses to given scenarios. – **American Sign Language Interpretation, SLO, 200-level**

As the examples above indicate, programs and disciplines sometimes use existing Student Learning Outcomes to assess college-wide core learning outcomes. In 2018-2019, about 15 percent of educational programs and 27 percent of disciplines used one of their previously developed SLOs to operationalize written communication (Figure 3). This indicates these assessments of WC have been completed in the past, and/or will be assessed in the future. Interestingly, almost 39 percent of all programs and disciplines have a student learning outcome related to written communication.⁴ So while many programs and disciplines assess WC as a Student Learning outcome, for reasons of their own, some did not use their writing SLO to assess WC in 2018-2019. The widespread existence of WC SLOs, and the significant use of SLOs to assess CLOs during the 2018-2019 assessment cycle indicates a high degree of integration of college-wide learning goals at the program and discipline level.

Figure 3. Written Communication Assessments Using Program or Discipline Student Learning Outcomes: 2018-2019



⁴ Examining the data presented in the *Student Learning Outcomes for Degree Awarding Programs and Select Certificates* and the *Student Learning Outcomes for Disciplines* it was noted that of the 80 programs and disciplines with SLOs, 31 had an SLO directly mentioning writing.

B. Sample Sizes

At NOVA, the faculty determine the appropriate course(s) in which to assess each core learning outcome. If a program or discipline chooses a course with a small number of class sections, it is customary to assess all sections. If the course has multiple sections (10+), the programs and disciplines may ask the Office of Academic Assessment to create a sample from a representative sub-set of courses offered across all campuses/modalities of the College; this sample typically equates to approximately one third of the total sections offered.

Figure 4 indicates the number of students assessed in 2018-2019. **The assessment of written communication involved 4,837 students.** Approximately 47 percent of those students were assessed in their educational programs and about 53 percent of students assessed in a discipline course (Figure 4). In Spring 2019, 50,011 students were enrolled at NOVA.⁵ The Office of Academic Assessment estimates about 10 percent of our students participated in the assessment of written communication.

Figure 4. Number of Students Assessed on Written Communication by Program and Discipline: 2018-2019⁶

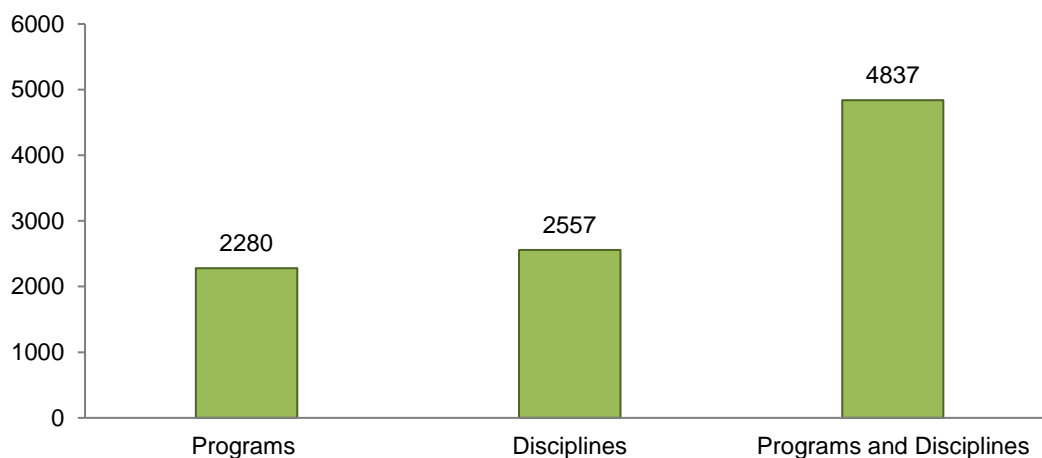


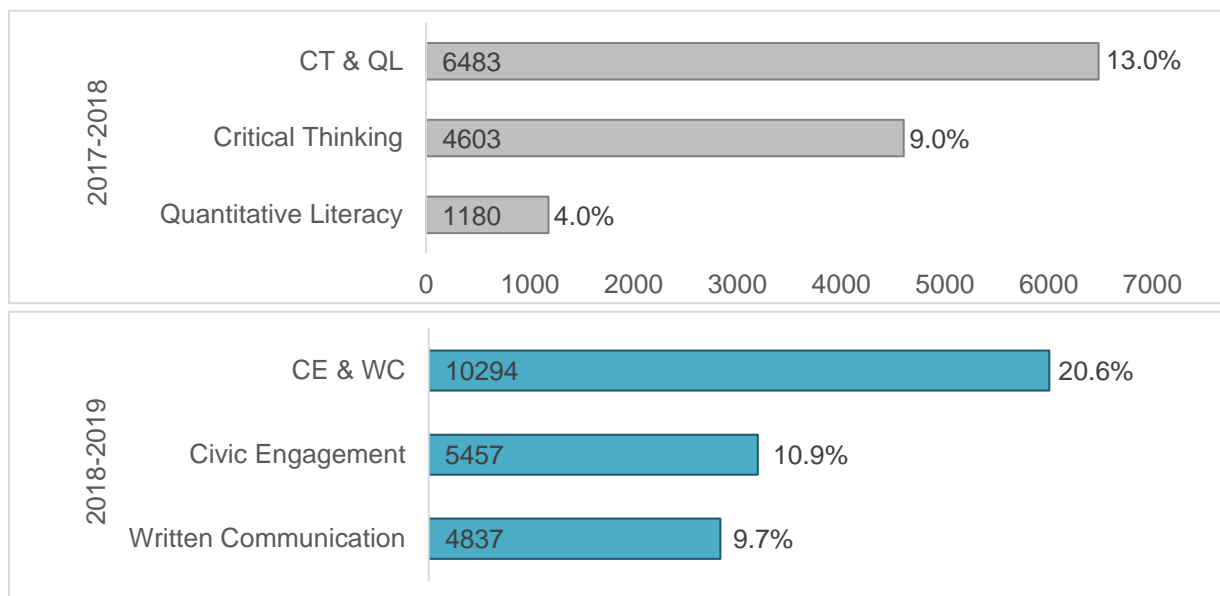
Figure 5 indicates the rise in the number and percentage of NOVA students captured in the second year of CLO assessment. The 2018-2019 assessment included 10,292 students.⁷ This is an increase of 3,809 students from the year before. This is also an increase in the percentage of students captured in CLO assessment. The 2017-2018 assessment of CLOs assessed 13 percent of the student population, while 2018-2019 assessment of CLOs captured 21 percent of the student population (Figure 5).

⁵ Data on student enrollment can be found in the [NOVA Fact Book](#). A population size of 50,011 students comes from Spring 2018 semester, when CLOs are typically assessed in a given assessment year.

⁶ Note Figure 4 includes the Music, Jazz/Popular Music Specialization in the program sample size. Any figures and tables with disaggregated data by course level does NOT include this total as sample size and target scores were not disaggregated when reported.

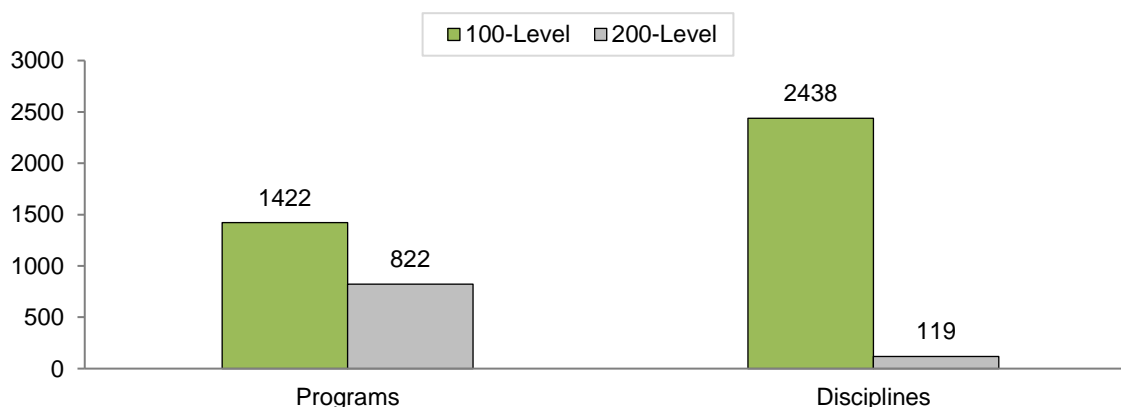
⁷ The Office of Academic Assessment recognizes that there may be some overlap between assessments; specifically, we may occasionally assess the same student in two different CT, or QL (etc.) assignments. As we don't ask for student identification numbers from most programs and disciplines, we cannot determine the exact level of overlap, but we assume it is small.

Figure 5. Comparison Sample Sizes: 2017-2018 and 2018-2019



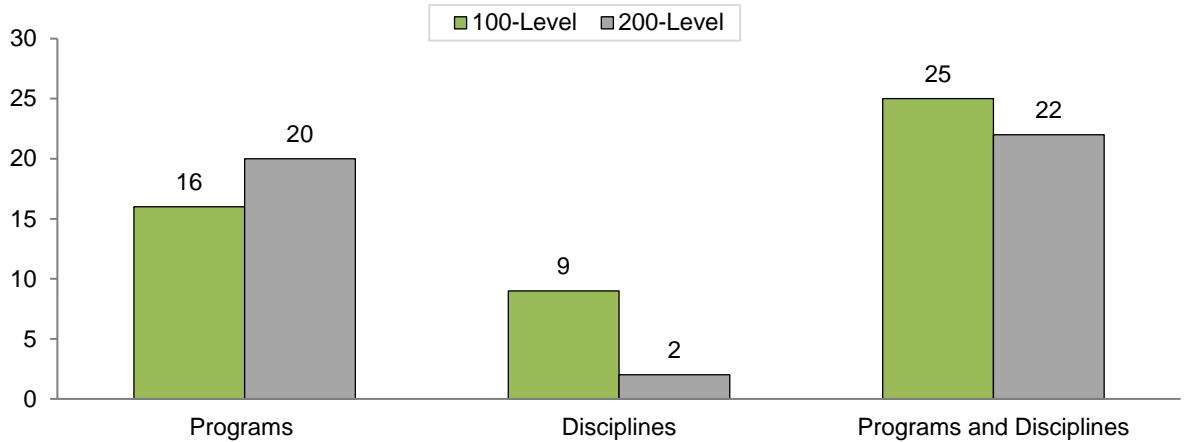
In both programs and disciplines, the students participating in the assessment of written communication were primarily pulled from 100-level courses. As Figure 6 indicates, 600 more students were assessed in 100-level *program* courses than in 200-level *program* courses. The same is true for disciplines, but the gap between the number of students assessed is much wider. *Disciplines* assessed 2,319 more students at the 100-level than at the 200-level. More students typically enroll in 100-level courses. Courses at the 100-level are more likely to be general education courses, which easily transfer to four-year schools. While the 200-level courses tend to be program specific in nature and have a smaller enrollment cap. In contrast, when looking at the number of courses assessed, a different trend emerges. While there are a larger number of *students* assessed in 100-level courses, more 200-level courses were assessed at the *programmatic* level (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Written Communication Student Sample Sizes by Course Level by Program and Discipline⁸



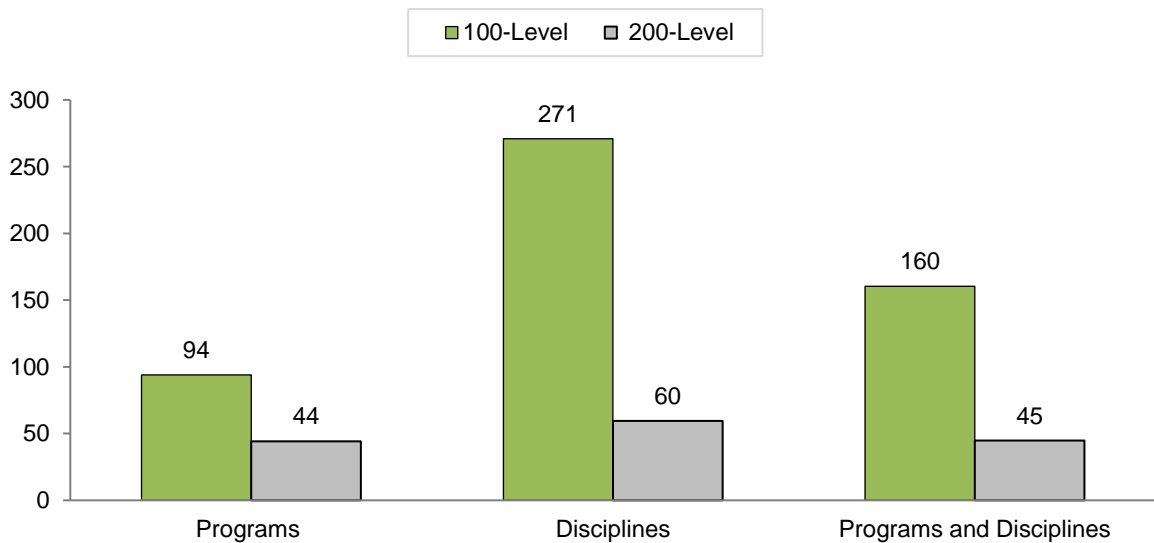
⁸ The Jazz/Popular Music Specialization is not included in this graph. They assessed students at the 100- and 200-level but did not disaggregate their results by course level.

Figure 7. Number of Courses Assessing Written Communication by Program and Discipline



The average number of students assessed in 100 and 200-level courses offers insight into current assessment processes. Non-degree granting discipline 100-level courses tend to have a larger number of students since they typically fulfill general education requirements. In 2018-2019, the average 100-level class size assessed is 160 students (Figure 8). Disaggregated, the pattern is clear. Discipline courses assess an average of 271 students in the 100-level courses while programs have an average of 94 students in their 100-level courses. Meanwhile, 200-level program courses tend to have a smaller number of students because the focus is on practicing and mastering the skills learnt in the 100-level courses; and an average of only 44 students were assessed in 200-level courses.

Figure 8. Average Sample Size in 100 and 200-level Courses Assessing Written Communication by Program and Discipline



Section III: Measuring Student Achievement in Written Communication

Course embedded assessment requires a minimum threshold of success for student learning. At NOVA this minimum threshold, or target goal, is determined by the faculty of each educational program and discipline, using a variety of measures: national certification exams; standards determined by state licensing agencies or accrediting bodies; criteria designed by the discipline’s national association body (e.g., The American Chemicals Society’s Guidelines for Lab Safety for Chemistry); or by faculty using their professional expertise. Target goal thresholds are commonly set at a student performance level of 70 percent or better on an assignment or exam.

Success regarding target goals signals student achievement of the competencies that were assessed. Achievement of target goals also indicates an improvement in the assessment process, the culture of assessment, student learning via both the assessment process and program-/discipline-specific skills, and students, faculty, and public awareness about the process and its results.

Section III focuses on: (1) the methodologies used to assess written communication (e.g., how programs/disciplines assessed this CLO and the effectiveness of their assessment method) and (2) how, and to what degree, programs and disciplines and students met target goals.

A. Methods for Assessing Written Communication

Major Categories of Written Communication

Programs and disciplines use a variety of definitions and methods to assess students’ written communication skills. In order to assess WC college-wide, the Office of Academic Assessment collated the data from all the assessment measures of WC: assignment descriptions, exams, and rubrics, noting key terms used. Then these key terms were organized into lists of “like-minded” terms, which were refined into eight categories. Through an analysis of the measures that were used to assess written communication across the College in 2018-19, the following categories of the assessed CLO were identified (Table 5).

Table 5. Major Categories of Written Communication

Category	Description
<i>Writing Mechanics (WM)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates the writing mechanics of the student (spelling, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, proper word choice, etc.).
<i>Organizational and Structure (OS)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates organization as it creates clarity and aids understanding. Students use organizational and structural conventions specific to their field/course content and/or introductions that clearly indicate the content of the essay/paper/etc.; research question/thesis statement that holds the essence of the document; a body with organized points and sub-points; a conclusion that brings the written piece together.
<i>Supporting Material (SM)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates students on the quality, quantity, and/or use of evidence to boost the argument/perspective of the written piece. Supportive materials may be further evaluated on credibility/bias/accuracy. Students use supporting materials specific to their field/course content.
<i>Perspective (P)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates how well the student provides and understands their perspective, clearly writes the argument with their perspective in mind, and/or provides (and maybe rebuts) alternative perspective/s well.
<i>Tone (T)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates the tone of the written piece and whether it matches the assignment purpose. Tone is generally conveyed through the

	choice of words, or the viewpoint of a writer on a particular subject. Students use tone specific to their field/course content.
<i>Explanation/Description (ED)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates whether the written piece has explanations that are well-developed, clear and concise, and provides better context to the thesis/assignment purpose. Might also measure the degree to which the explanations/descriptions take away from the thesis (e.g., the text is similar to a rant). Students use explanations specific to their field/course content.
<i>Conceptual Understanding of Concepts/ Terms/ Theories (CU)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates how well students understand the topic of the written piece and how well students clearly, concretely, and appropriately integrate concepts, terms, or theories into their written work.
<i>Analysis/Interpretation (AI)</i>	Assessment measure evaluates how well students incorporate their own perspectives, inferences, and solutions based on the supportive evidence. Analysis could be in relation to a research topic or an analysis of oneself or (capstone) project. Analysis might discuss the importance or significance of the topic of the document. Analysis might discuss: how the pieces of the whole are connected; causes and effects; strengths and/or weaknesses; advantages vs. disadvantages.
<i>Other (O)</i> ⁹	

The methods programs and disciplines employed in their written communication assessments were coded using the categories above. This coding allows for an analysis of the forms of written communication students learn at NOVA. Each individual test/rubric item fitting into one of the eight categories of written communication was counted. Coders noted, by category, each item requiring written communication on every exam and rubric. Therefore, the number of items categorized as written communication is greater than the number of assessment tools used to assess written communication.

The number of times a category is coded will also be higher than the number of programs and disciplines assessing written communication. For instance, students must engage their written communication skills 11 times to meet the target goal in the English assessment: writing mechanics (2), organization and structure (3), supporting material (1), tone (2), explanation/description (2), and conceptual understanding (1).

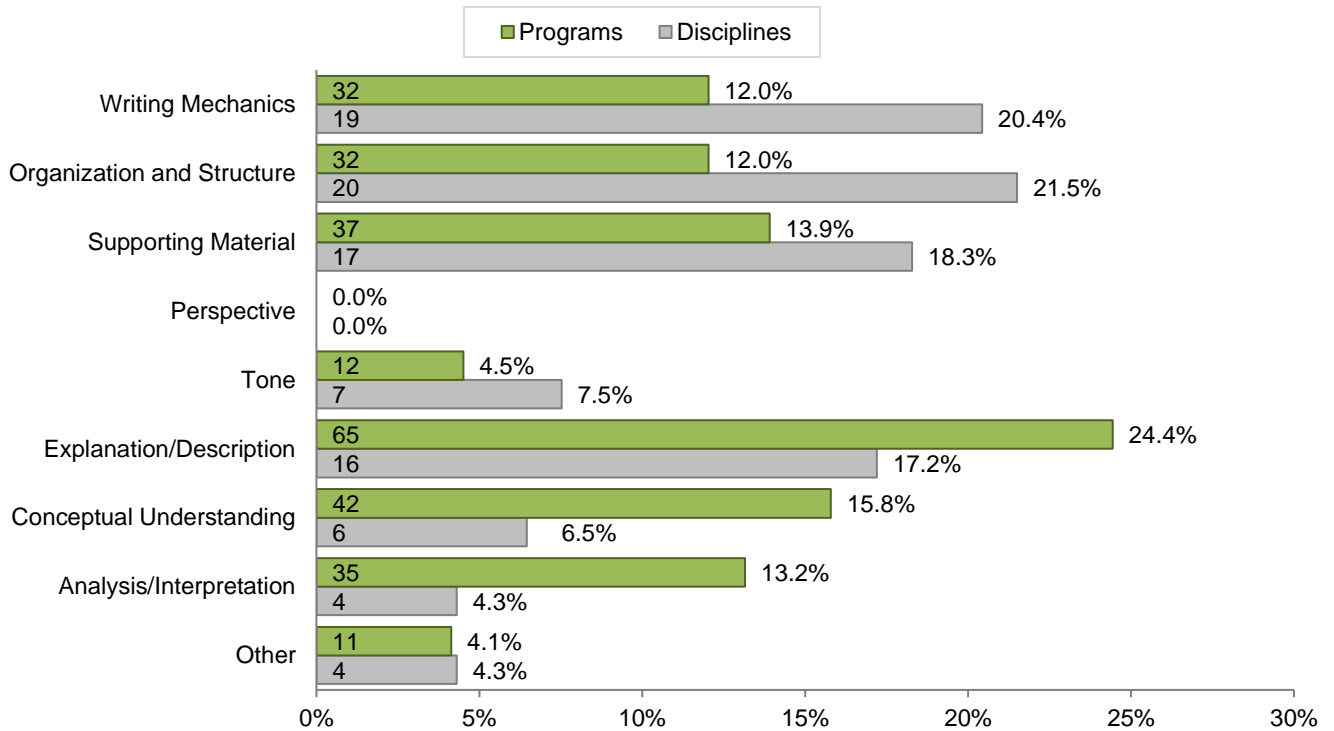
Across all rubrics and exams, 359 instances of written communication assessment were coded. Programs assessed written communication 266 times. Disciplines assessed written communication 96 times (see Appendix A Table H).

When disaggregating the data by programs and disciplines, an interesting trend emerges. As Figure 9 shows, disciplines primarily assessed writing mechanics and organizational structure, focusing on the “how to” of writing. Programs primarily assessed written communication as explanation and description.

The American Association of Colleges and Universities’ report, [Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work](#), rates the ability to communicate effectively in writing as one of the top ten skills executives and hiring managers are looking for in new hires. Thus, the teaching of writing is important as a key foundational skill used to support other forms of learning, it is also a highly regarded skill upon graduation.

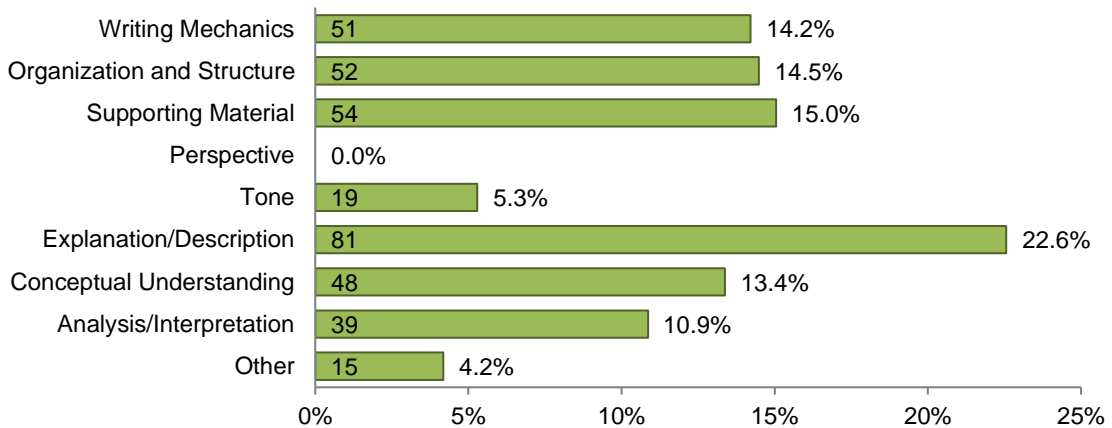
⁹ Writing specific to a profession, (i.e. appropriate notation of physician’s comments in dental assisting), is an example of “Other.”

Figure 9. Written Communication Categories Measured by Programs and Disciplines



Exams or rubrics describing the assignment expectations were the two methods used when assessing WC. Rubrics are used in a variety of assignments. They assess writing samples for business letters, works of fiction, and translations of client needs into technical writing for employees. As Figure 10 indicates, when assessing written communication NOVA, via rubric or exam, most often assessed explanation and description. The other top three categories, which follow behind explanation and description in usage (23 percent), are use of supporting materials (15 percent) writing mechanics (14 percent), and organization and structure (14 percent).

Figure 10. Written Communication Categories Measured in Rubrics and Exams

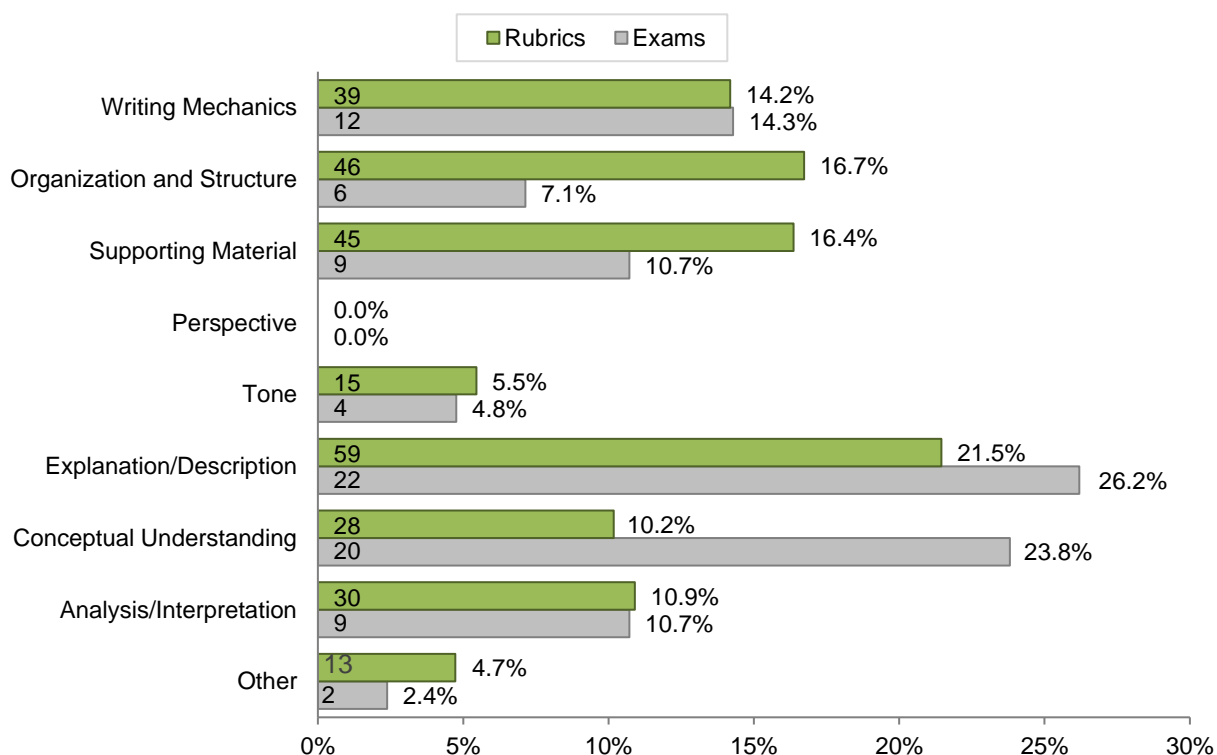


The descriptive elements of the instructions/grading criteria on WC rubrics fell most often into one of four categories of written communication: explanation and description in usage (22

percent), organization and structure (17 percent), use of supporting materials (16 percent), and writing mechanics (14 percent; Figure 11).

Written communication exam questions reflect a slightly different set of learning goals. As Figure 10 displays, WC exam questions tended to focus mostly on explanation and description (26 percent), and conceptual understanding (24 percent). Half of all the criteria used to assess written communication via exam were from one of these two categories (Figure 11). As Figure 10 indicates, rubrics exams used conceptual understanding twice as often as rubrics (24 percent vs. 10 percent).

Figure 11. Written Communication Categories by Assessment Method



Assessment Measures’ Alignment with the Written Communication Competency

The Office of Academic Assessment analyzed program and discipline WC assessment asking how well NOVA WC assessment measures aligned with the VCCS definition of written communication (Table 6). Rubrics and exams were also examined to assess the clarity of the operational definitions of written communication (Table 6). Sample sizes were categorized (small, medium, or large). Assessment methods were examined for their alignment with relevant operational definitions of written communication. Finally, student achievement on the assessment was compared to the target goal set by the faculty.

Table 6. Coding Descriptions of Assessment Method and Target Data

Category	Description
<i>Operationalization (O)</i>	Program/discipline provided an operationalized definition of the CLO that was clear and measurable; includes actions students will take to demonstrate learning of this outcome (e.g., demonstrate proficiency in, analyze data, interpret information, etc.)
<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>SSS – Small Sample Size</i> : Samples with 33 students or fewer.
	<i>MSS – Medium Sample Size</i> : Samples between 34 and 69 students.
	<i>LSS – Large Sample Size</i> : Samples over 70 students.
<i>Outcome-Method Alignment (OMA)</i>	Method/assignment used effectively measures the operationalized CLO.
<i>Rubric/Measure</i>	<i>Rubric in APER (R)</i> : Separate Rubric/assessment measure and/or grading scale was not provided but was explained in the <i>APER</i> .
	<i>No Rubric Provided (NRP)</i> : No rubric was provided either with the <i>APER</i> submission email or in the <i>APER</i> .
	<i>Assignment-Specific Rubric (ASR)</i> : Rubric designed to evaluate the CLO being assessed and one or both of the following aspects: 1. Clear description of grading criteria/grading scale is provided. 2. Provides purpose of assignment
	<i>Generic Rubric (GR)</i> : Does not directly evaluate the CLO being assessed, is too generic, grading scale not provided, no purpose presented.
<i>Examination</i>	<i>Outcome-Specific Examination (OS)</i> : The exam questions evaluate the assessed CLO by addressing 3 or more aspects of the CLO.
	<i>Generic Examination (GE)</i> : The exam questions do not fully evaluate the assessed CLO. Only assessed 2 or fewer of the concepts and/or is unrelated to the CLO.
<i>Target</i>	<i>Criteria Target (CTA)</i> : Target was met in 75% of the criteria, but not overall.
	<i>Overall Target (OT)</i> : Target was met overall.
<i>Other (OTH)</i>	

Using the criteria in Table 6, 82 percent of programs' and disciplines' assessment measures align with the VCCS written communication competency. This level of alignment between NOVA's written communication measures and the VCCS definition of written communication is higher than expected. NOVA will continue working with faculty to tighten the relationship between their operationalizing of WC and the VCCS definition.

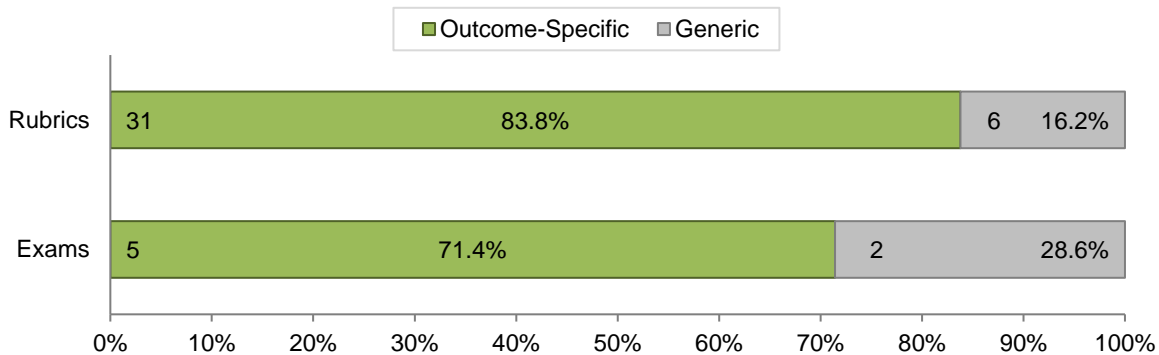
The faculty of 37 programs and disciplines used rubrics to assess WC. Exams were used by 7 programs. Rubric scores will be discussed first, along with examples of Assignment/Outcome-Specific rubrics. Exam questions and the assessment of WC will be discussed second.

Almost 84 percent of rubrics were coded as Assignment/Outcome-Specific (Figure 12). This means the rubrics are clear regarding grading criteria and the purpose of the assignment. This specificity makes the assignment more easily understood by students. Extensive research suggests that clear guidelines for content and assessment on an assignment improves student success on an assignment.¹⁰

Additionally, 71 percent of WC exam questions coded as Outcome-Specific (Figure 12). This means the exam questions evaluated written communication by addressing at least 3 of the 8 written communication categories described in Table 5. Following Figure 12, there are successful examples of Assignment/Outcome-Specific WC rubrics and exams in use at NOVA.

¹⁰ Almarode, J., & Vandas, K. (2018). *Clarity for Learning: Five Essential Practices that Empower Students and Teachers*. New York: Corwin.

Figure 12. Utilization of Outcome-Specific and Generic Rubrics and Exams



Assignment-Specific Rubrics

The *Mathematics* discipline asked students to submit a 3-4 sentence reflection on an Excel project or assignment, showing that the student reflected on the information from the assignment and the results. They were further asked to develop and express complex ideas clearly, coherently, and logically in a style appropriate for both purpose and audience (see Appendix D).

The *Spanish* discipline asked students to write loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events and other personal topics. These texts were evaluated on the basis on five categories: task completion, content, vocabulary, grammar and spelling, and mechanics (see Appendix E).

The *Interior Design* program evaluated students' concept statement, which was incorporated into their final project. The concept statement is a short description of the students' project design. Students were evaluated based on six elements: grammar, spelling, concise language use, locale/setting of the design, the atmosphere for the design, and the vision of the project (see Appendix F).

Outcome-Specific Exams

The *Physical Therapist Assistant* program utilized the "Documentation" portion of the Physical Therapist Clinical Performance Instrument to evaluate how well students could produce "quality documentation in a timely manner to support the delivery of physical therapy services." Actions assessed relating to written communication included:

1. Selecting relevant information to document.
2. Documenting all aspects of physical therapy care provided.
3. Producing documentation that is accurate, concise, timely, legible, grammatically and technically correct.
4. Producing documentation consistent with guidelines, format, and requirements.

The *Information Systems Technology* program assessed students' knowledge around Structured Query Language and Entity Relationship Diagrams. Students primarily utilized skills such as utilizing proper syntax writing and accurately organizing relationships.

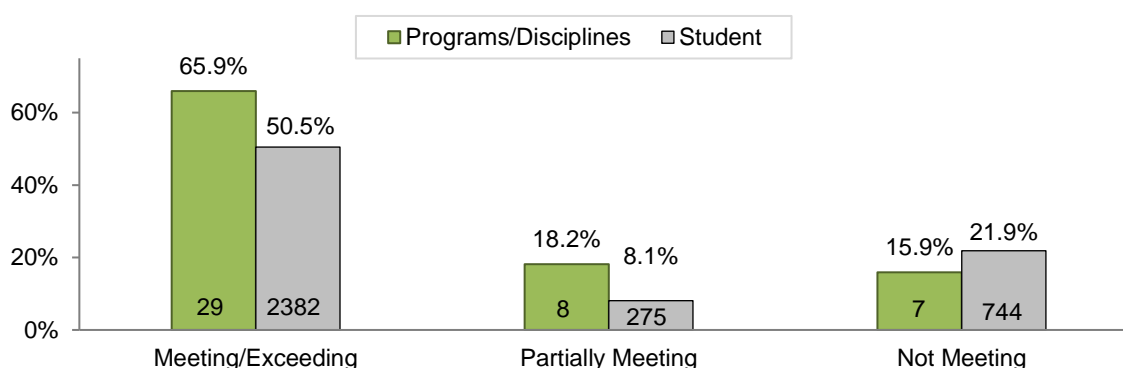
B. Achieving Written Communication Target Goals

Target goals are set by programs and disciplines to measure student success in written communication. They allow programs and disciplines to investigate their own ability to achieve the target goals and to examine student success. They then analyze the results and take measures to improve student learning. The Office of Academic Assessment compiles the program and discipline data to analyze how well individual programs and disciplines are meeting their target goals. As well, the Office of Academic Assessment aggregates the student data to create a college-wide student sample. Therefore, the data discussed below operates as two samples in concert: student data and program/discipline data. Target goal success is rated in one of four categories: exceeded target (i.e., results are 10 percent or more than the set target); met target; partially met target; or did not meet target.

Overall, 4,837 students participated in the assessment of written communication at NOVA. At 3,401 students, the target data sample is subset of the total number of students participating in WC assessment.¹¹ While the Office of Academic Assessment is satisfied with a sample of 3,401 students, they will work with programs and disciplines to ensure the target data sample is improved in future assessments.

As indicated by Figure 13, 50 percent of the 3,401 students assessed, met or exceeded their program/discipline's target goal. Another 8 percent of students assessed partially met their target goals. Therefore, with regard to written communication, almost 60 percent of students exceeded, met, or partially met the target goals set for them by their program or discipline. Programs and disciplines did slightly better, with 66 percent of programs and disciplines meeting or exceeding their target goals. Another 18 percent of programs and disciplines partially met their target goals.

Figure 13. Achieving WC Targets Overall by Programs/Disciplines and Students

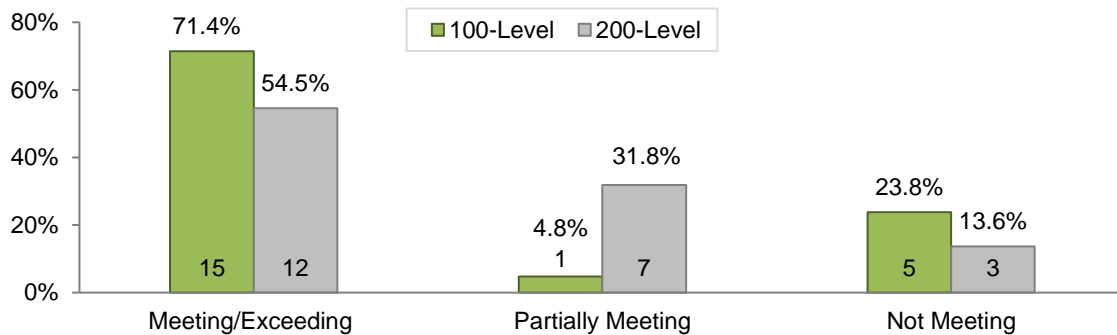


Disaggregating program and discipline target goal data by 100-level and 200-level courses reveals important differences (Figure 14). First, 71 percent of NOVA courses assessing students at the 100-level met or exceeded their targets. At the 200-level, 55 percent of the programs and disciplines met or exceed their target. When it comes to meeting/exceeding the target goals, the success for programs and disciplines at the 100-level is about 16 percent

¹¹ Mathematics, while they had an excellent plan to assess WC, there was confusion in its execution. Faculty did not consistently inform students the assignment was being graded on content *and* writing. The resulting data was flawed, with regard to target scores. Therefore, the Office of Academic Assessment set aside their data (over 1,300 students) when examining student target scores. Another discipline did not indicate if their target goals were met. They are missing from this sample (114 students).

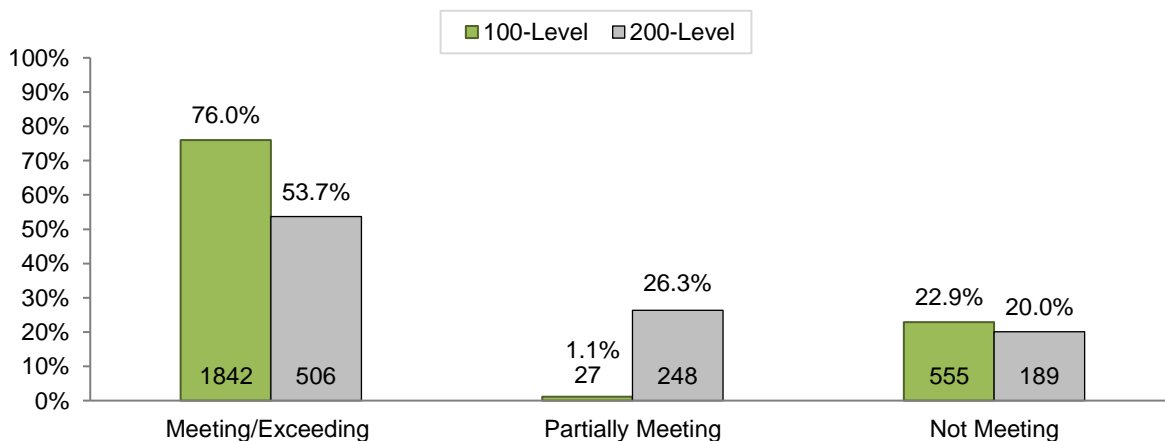
higher than the rate of success at the 200-level (Figure 14). However, when combining the met/exceeded and partially met data sets, 86 percent of programs and disciplines assessing at the 200-level hit this standard, as does 76 percent of the 100-level courses. The Written Communication Working Group will discuss these numbers to ascertain what options for future WC assessment.

Figure 14. Programs and Disciplines Achieving Written Communication Targets by 100-Level and 200-Level Courses



At the 100-level, 76 percent of *students* are meeting/exceeding the target goals (Figure 15). At the 200-level, 54 percent of students met or exceed their target goals. Another 26 percent of students assessed at the 200-level partially met their goals. Therefore, at the 200-level, the number of students partially meeting, meeting, or exceeding their WC target goals increases is 80%.

Figure 15. Students Achieving Written Communication Targets by 100-Level and 200-Level Courses¹²



¹² In addition to Mathematics and Art History students, Music/Jazz Specialization students are missing from this sample. They did not disaggregate their students by 100 and 200-level courses, (34 students).

Section IV: Actions to Improve Student Learning

Using assessment results to improve the assessment process and the learning process is essential to continually improving student learning. Therefore, closing the loop, or presenting the assessment findings to the faculty is the last step, (before the cycle begins again). The faculty use the assessment results, making alterations to the processes to improve assessment and/or learning. This section of the report examines the changes presented in the Use of Results section of the APERs and *CLO Reports*.¹³ These annual reports detail the assessment plan and results for each program and discipline. The changes outlined in the Use of Results discussion are coded into 5 major categories: curriculum specific changes, changes regarding program resources, changes regarding co-curricular resources, changes in the assessment process, and changes made at the college-level (Table 7; See Table M in Appendix A for Descriptions and Examples of Major and Subcategories. See Table O in Appendix A for Use of Results by Subcategory in Descending Order of use).¹⁴ Each category has sub-categories. The aggregation of this data allows for the assessment of the college-wide changes used to improve the assessment process and student learning.

Table 7. Use of Results Codes: Major and Subcategories

Major Category	Subcategories
Curriculum-Specific	Curricular Change
	Course Revision
	Pedagogy
	Subject-Matter Expert Feedback
Program Resources	Financial
	Human Resources
	General Resources
Co-Curricular Resources	Co-Curricular Opportunities
	Academic Support/Advising
SLO Assessment Process	SLO Assessment Change
	Data Analysis Method Change
	Student Learning Outcome Change
	Target Increased
	Target Decreased
	Target Clarified
	Sample Size
	Communication on the Assessment Process
College-Level	Dual Enrollment
	Articulation Agreement
	Recruitment/Marketing

A. Analysis of Actions for Improvement by Major Category

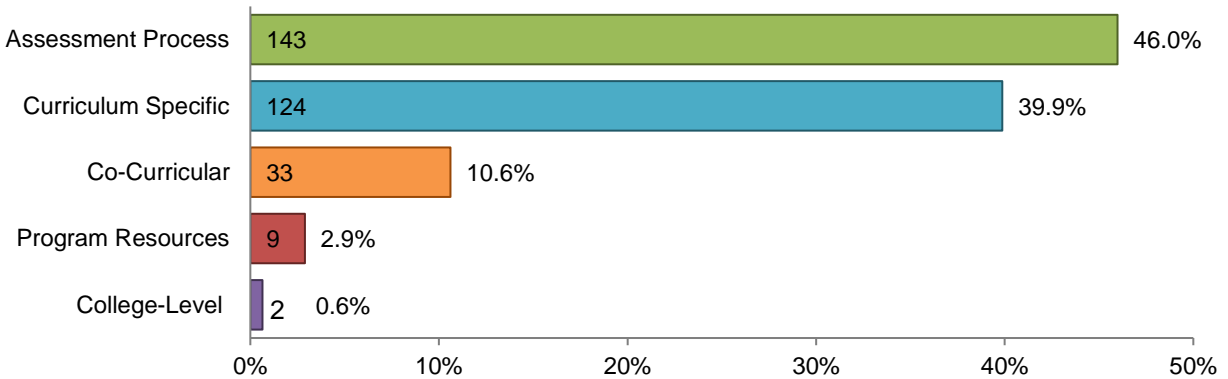
In 2018-2019 the 44 programs and disciplines assessing written communication created 311 actions to improve student learning and the assessment process. This averages to 7.1 actions or improvement per program and discipline (see Appendix A, Table M). This demonstrates that programs and disciplines use their assessment data to plan and seek improvements.

¹³ As a reminder, programs report using the Annual Planning and Evaluation Report (APER). They report on their SLOs, CLOs, and program goals. The disciplines without degrees submit an attenuated report, which focuses on the core learning outcomes assessments for the college.

¹⁴ This section of the report focuses on the most utilized major categories and relevant associated subcategories. Data for all the Use of Results subcategories can be found in Appendix A, Tables I, J-Q. Additionally, the code sheet includes an Other category, but it has not been used in several years, so it is not considered in this report.

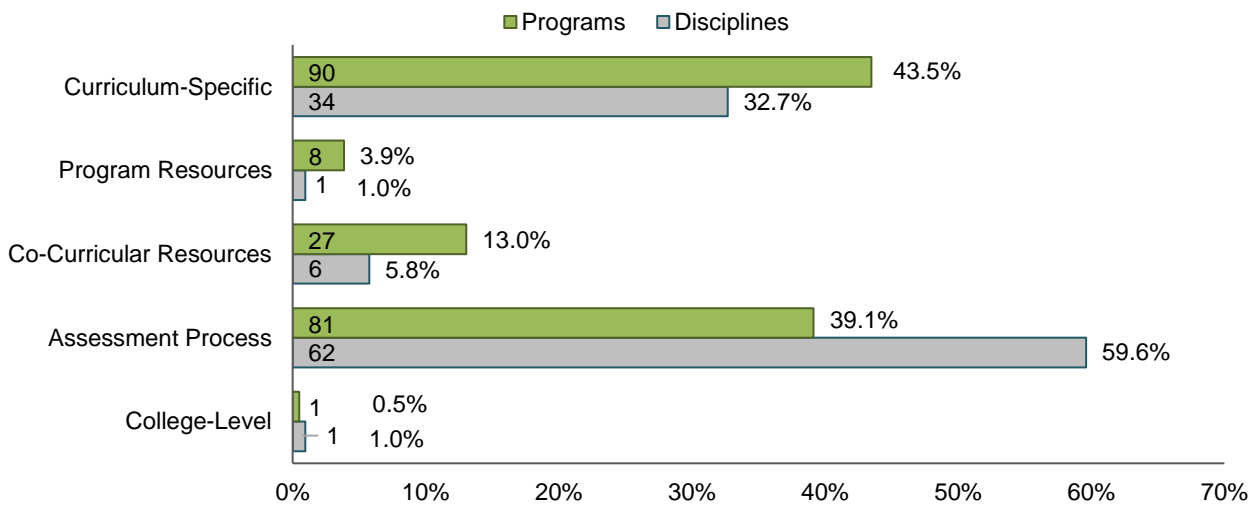
Approximately 46 percent of the actions taken, or planned, relate to improving the assessment process (Figure 16). This is the most frequently used category of actions in 2018-2019. At 40 percent, curriculum specific changes are the second most frequently mentioned (Figure 16). Programs and disciplines tend to make, or plan for, changes in areas over which they have control. Therefore, there are few attempts to: improve resources (new faculty, facilities, etc.) or make college-level changes (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Actions for Improvement Mentioned in the Uses of Results



Data disaggregated by program and discipline reveals that programs and disciplines are at different stages in the assessment process (Figure 17). Curricular change and changes to the assessment process are the two most frequently noted changes made to improve assessment and student learning (Figure 16). It is best practice to refine data collection and analysis techniques prior to making curricular changes. As mentioned previously, 2017-2018 is the first-year disciplines reported on their assessment process. In line with best practice, 60 percent of the disciplines' changes are in their assessment process (Figure 17). Meanwhile, programs tend to have more developed assessment processes, thus most of their actions, 44 percent, are curricular specific. Programs continue to improve the assessment process, with 39 percent of their actions being assessment oriented.

Figure 17. Key Actions for Improvement Mentioned by Programs and Disciplines



B. Key Actions to Improve Program and Discipline Assessment Processes

In 2018-2019, programs and disciplines made 143 changes in their assessment process. The most frequent changes in the assessment process concerned improving the communication between the CLO Lead, (or steering committee), and the program or discipline faculty.

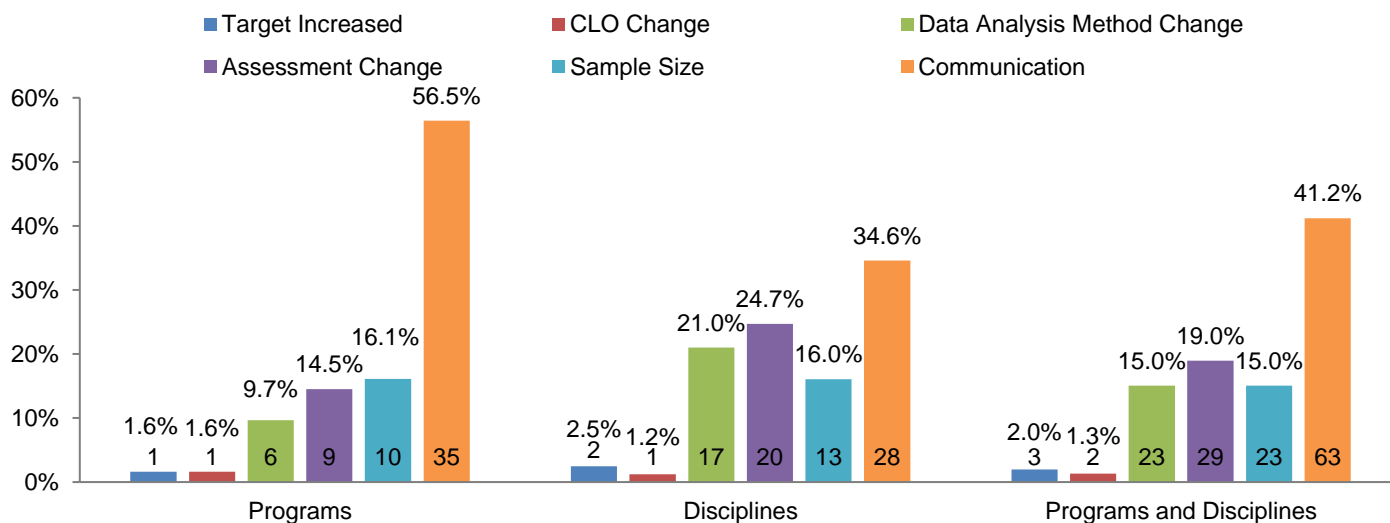
Communication with NOVA administrators is counts in this category as well. CLO Leads (or steering committees) are creating best practices for helping faculty administer the assessment measure, communicating the need to spend more time on a topic in class, and communicating assessment results are all forms of interactions coded as changes in communication.

Changes in communication accounted for 56 percent of all changes made by programs and disciplines in the assessment process. Breaking that down, disciplines recorded 28 changes in communication (Figure 18). With 35 changes in communication, programs also reported most of their assessment changes were made in this area. This attention to improving the movement of information to the faculty (full-time and part-time) and administrators, notes an appreciation for closing the loop. Closing the loop ensures all faculty can use the assessment data to improve student learning.

The label “assessment change” refers to a change in how the core learning outcome assessment (often a program or discipline SLO) is defined since its last assessment. There may have also been the addition of break-out definitions of the CLO, allowing the program or discipline learn more detailed information on student writing practices. Disciplines made 25 percent of their assessment related changes in this area (Figure 18). In short, they reconsidered how they defined written communication, or they deepened the definition with more detail. Programs made 15 percent of their assessment changes in this area (Figure 18).

The label “data analysis method change” refers to a change or modification in the method: modifying or creating a new rubric or exam. Disciplines made 21 percent of their assessment changes in this area. Programs made 10 percent of their changes in this category (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Actions to Improve the Assessment Process Aggregated Total and Disaggregated by Program and Disciplines



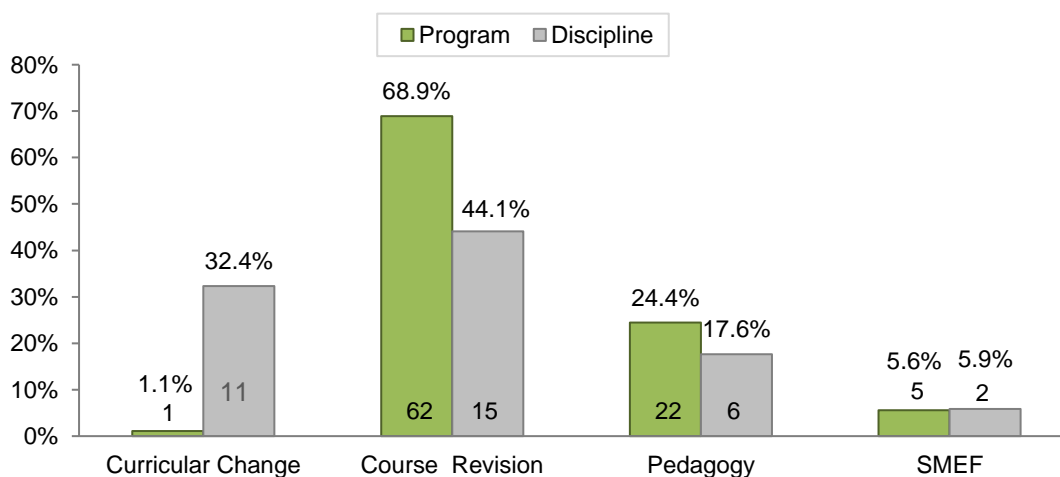
C. Key Actions to Improve the Curriculum by Programs and Disciplines

Actions mentioned in the Uses of Results section of the annual assessment results meant to improve course content and forms of instruction to improve student learning are categorized as curriculum specific changes. Curriculum specific changes fall into the following categories: curricular change (change to the degree requirements); course revision (modifying course content, adding review sessions, or 1st drafts to a paper); pedagogical changes (revising the means of delivering course content—adding more discussion, new technology, altering the course enrollment); changes in course or program pre-requisites; and subject matter expert feedback (seeking recommendations from employers, experts in the field, an accreditation body).

After assessing written communication programs and disciplines made most of their curricular changes in course revision. As Figure 19 indicates, programs made 62 course revisions. This is 69 percent of all the curricular changes made by programs in 2018-2019. Disciplines also made most of their curricular changes with course revisions. Disciplines made 15 actions regarding course revision, 41 percent of all their changes. Additionally, pedagogical changes made-up 24 percent of programs' and 18 percent of disciplines' changes. Course revision and pedagogical changes directly influence course content and student and faculty interaction. Programs and disciplines are working to improve learning where the rubber hits the road: inside the educational spaces—the physical or digital—where students learn.

Thirty-four percent of discipline changes were made in curricular change. Disciplines made 11 curricular changes (Figure 19). Programs made one curricular change. Programs and disciplines sought expert advice concerning written communication at about the same rate, around 6 percent.

Figure 19. Key Actions to Improve the Curriculum by Programs and Disciplines

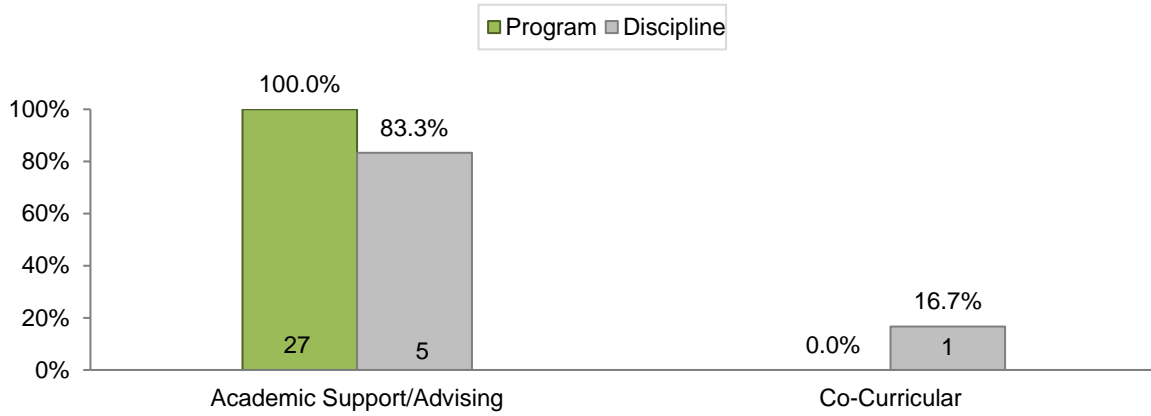


D. Co-Curricular Actions Implemented by Programs and Disciplines

Co-curricular activities are educational events happening outside the classroom/digital class space. Academic support and advising co-curricular activities aimed at improving student learning. Support activities range from faculty connecting students with peer tutors, to connecting students with academic support services like the Writing Center, Science and/or

Math lab. Some programs and disciplines also directed students to career advising on NOVA's campuses. Programs made 27 changes to their approach to academic support and advising (Figure 20). Disciplines made 5 such changes (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Key Actions to Improve Co-Curricular Activities by Programs and Disciplines



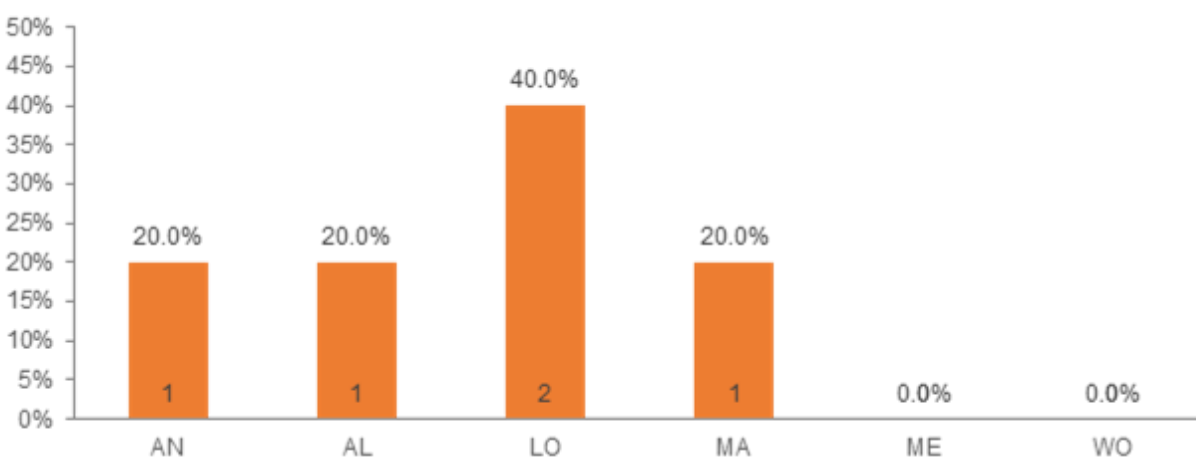
Section V: Written Communication Working Group Recommendations

The Written Communication Working Group considers the data presented in this written communication audit. The meeting was discussion-based, ending with suggestions for future WC assessments at NOVA. This section of the audit discusses working group participants, and highlights from the discussion.

A. Written Communication Working Group Participants

Five deans, provosts, and faculty members attended the 2017-2018 Written Communication Working Group Zoom meeting.¹⁵ Figure 21 below details the attendee's home campuses (see Appendix H for list of registrants).

Figure 21. Written Communication Working Group Participants Home Campus



B. Discussion Highlights

The intimate nature of the working group lead to an excellent discussion concerning student progress in written communication at NOVA. The working group also discussed the teaching and assessment of written communication. What follows is a summary of that discussion.

Discussion Summary:

- Challenges to incorporating and/or assessing Written Communication
 - Not all classes require English pre-requisites, which then shifts focus in the classroom from learning the material to teaching reading and writing.
 - How do we assess written communication without assessing critical thinking?
 - Students (and faculty) often see writing as an "English skill". It might be helpful to have a writing program administrator, who could help faculty development in writing across the curriculum.
- Suggestions for change and general comments
 - Embed writing in all curricula.
 - Standardize writing by creating a list of skills expected of students.
 - Instill cross discipline thinking in faculty and students.

¹⁵ Invitations were sent to the faculty and administrators involved in the 2017-2018 assessment of WC. Also invited were faculty and administrators involved in the 2020-2021 written communication assessment.

- Use online gaming to improve writing.
- Clearly describe pedagogical goals and assessment methods on all assignments.
- Provide students with copies of any rubric used to assess their work.
 - Include the SLO/CLO in the assignment details for students.
- Syllabi should note all assignments.
- Advisors, tutors and faculty need to work together.
- Teach students to regularly check the outcomes page on CANVAS.
- Language courses can improve students' writing in English, as they discuss grammar.
- Share infographics and target data at PUP.
- Host professional development activities.
- Infographics with assessment results can be shared more widely with students and faculty.
- Close the loop via professional development and collaboration among faculty.

Section VI: Conclusion

The 2018-2019 CLO assessments (CE and WC) included 10,292 students.¹⁶ This is an increase of 3,809 students from the year before. The Office of Academic Assessment will track the number of students participating in the assessment process to see if the numbers continue to rise, or if the number of students participating somehow depends on the core learning outcome being assessed. 4,837 NOVA students, across modalities, took part in the written communication assessment process. The students were assessed in courses from 33 educational programs and standalone certificates and 11 disciplines without degrees.

Of these 44 programs and disciplines 18 percent used their existing student learning outcomes to assess written communication. Additionally, 83 percent of programs' and disciplines' rubrics and 71 percent of their exams clearly aligned with the VCCS definition of written communication. Approximately 22 percent of questions, or items on a rubric, used to operationalize written communication assessed it as an explanation or description (used 81 times by programs and disciplines). Writing mechanics, organization and structure, conceptual understanding, and supporting materials were used by disciplines and programs to assess student written communication; with each form of written assessment being used between 13 and 15 percent of the time.

Each year the Office of Academic Assessment assesses the quality of assessment reporting by programs and disciplines. The overall quality of 2018-2019 written communication assessment reports by programs and disciplines is excellent. On average, 92 percent of program and discipline reports reached the meeting expectations scoring range (90-100 percent).

According to the 2018-2019 assessment reports, disciplines and programs created 311 actions to improve written communication learning and assessment. Forty-four percent of actions established by *programs* were curricular in nature. Sixty percent of actions established by *disciplines* were focused on improving the assessment process.

The Written Communication Working Group, though small in size, had excellent suggestions and concerns around writing at NOVA. The small size of the group may have contributed to the useful nature of the conversation. Representative comments from the discussion suggest we consider the following:

- The English discipline is not the single overseer and teacher of writing. Writing is an essential skill in every program and discipline and as such, should be taught in every program and discipline.
- Include core learning outcome infographics on relevant Canvas course sites.
- Using innovative assignments (Crash Course videos, computer games, “real world” writing assignments, and assessment measures (meeting “digital age” students where they live) may improve their ability to learn and display what they’ve learned.
- Post written communication related assessment exam questions or prompts, rubrics, and sample innovative assignments on a Canvas page accessible to all faculty.

¹⁶ The Office of Academic Assessment recognizes that there may be some overlap between assessments; specifically, we may occasionally assess the same student in two different CT, or QL (etc.) assignments. As we don't ask for student identification numbers from most programs and disciplines, we cannot determine the exact level of overlap, but we assume it is small.

Appendix A: Data on Written Communication

Table A. Submission Rate of Annual Planning and Evaluation Reports Assessing Written Communication for Assessment Year 2017-2018

	Core Learning Outcome: Written Communication
Program	33
Discipline	11
Total	44

Table B. Number of Programs and Disciplines Using Student Learning Outcomes for Written Communication Assessment

	# of Reports	# Using SLOs	Percentage
Program	33	5	15.2
Discipline	11	3	27.3
Programs and Disciplines	44	8	18.2

Note: Liberal Arts and General Studies assessed Written Communication using the same discipline and therefore, were counted as one report. The discipline assessed was also counted separately (under disciplines). Social Sciences used a different discipline and therefore were counted once (as a program and as a discipline).

Table C. Comparison of Sample Sizes and Population Percentage: 2017-2018 and 2018-2019

	2017-2018 (49,011 Students Enrolled in Spring 2018)			2018-2019 (50,011 Students Enrolled in Spring 2019)		
	CT	QL	CT & QL	CE	WC	CE & WC
Sample Size	4603	1180	6483	5457	4835	10292
% of Population	9.4	2.4	13.2	10.9	9.6	20.5

Note: CT = Critical Thinking; QL = Quantitative Literacy; CE = Civic Engagement; WC = Written Communication

Table D. Written Communication Sample Sizes by Course Level

	100-Level	200-Level
Programs	1422	824
Disciplines	2438	119
Total	3860	943

Note: Music, Jazz/Popular Music Specialization not counted in this table as sample sizes were not disaggregated by course level.

Table E. Number of Courses Assessed and Average Sample Size by Course Level

	Number of Courses Assessed		Average Sample Size	
	100-Level	200-Level	100-Level	200-Level
Programs	16	20	94	44
Disciplines	9	2	271	60
Total	25	22	160	45

Note: Music, Jazz/Popular Music Specialization is counted twice in this sample since they assessed both 100 and 200-level courses. General Studies and Liberal Arts assessed one discipline for Written Communication while Social Sciences assessed a different discipline. Therefore, two multidisciplinary reports are accounted for (compared to one in the 2018-2019 *Institutional Effectiveness Audit of Civic Engagement*).

Table F. Effectivity of Rubrics and Exams by Discipline Group

	Rubrics (37 Rubrics Counted)					Exams (7 Exams Counted)				
	# of Rubrics	Assignment-Specific		Generic		# of Exams	Outcome-Specific		Generic	
		#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%
Program	26	20	76.9	6	23.1	7	5	71.4	2	28.6
Discipline	11	11	100	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	37	31	83.8	6	16.2	7	5	71.4	2	28.6

NOTE: Multidiscipline data not included in this table.

Table G. Written Communication Code Utilization by Educational Units

	Programs		Disciplines		Programs and Disciplines	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Writing Mechanics	32	12.0	19	20.4	51	14.2
Organization and Structure	32	12.0	20	21.5	52	14.5
Supporting Material	37	13.9	17	18.3	54	15.0
Tone	12	4.5	7	7.5	19	5.3
Perspective	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Explanation and Description	65	24.4	16	17.2	81	22.6
Conceptual Understanding of	42	15.8	6	6.5	48	13.4
Analysis and Interpretation	35	13.2	4	4.3	39	10.9
Other	11	4.1	4	4.3	15	4.2
Total	266	100	93	100	359	100

Table H. Written Communication Utilization by Assessment Method

	Rubrics		Exams		Rubrics and Exams	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Writing Mechanics	39	14.2	12	14.3	51	14.2
Organization and Structure	46	16.7	6	7.1	52	14.5
Supporting Material	45	16.4	9	10.7	54	15.0
Tone	15	5.5	4	4.8	19	5.3
Perspective	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Explanation and Description	59	21.5	22	26.2	81	22.6
Conceptual Understanding of	28	10.2	20	23.8	48	13.4
Analysis and Interpretation	30	10.9	9	10.7	39	10.9
Other	13	4.7	2	2.4	15	4.2
Total	275	100	84	100	359	100

Table I. Written Communication Target Achievement by Programs and Disciplines: All Level Courses

	Programs		Disciplines		Overall	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Exceeded	12	34.3	3	33.3	15	34.1
Met	11	31.4	3	33.3	14	31.8
Partially Met	7	20.0	1	11.1	8	18.2
Did Not Meet	5	14.3	2	22.2	7	15.9
Total	35	100	9	100	44	100

Note: Art History did not report a target, therefore no data on whether target was met is included. Additionally, SDV is not included in this table as explained in the report. Tables I-L will not include neither Art History nor SDV.

Table J. Written Communication Target Achievement by Programs and Disciplines: 100-Level and 200-Level Courses

	100-Level Courses						200-Level courses					
	Programs		Disciplines		Overall		Programs		Disciplines		Overall	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Exceeded	7	46.7	1	14.2	8	38.1	5	23.8	2	100.0	7	31.8
Met	4	33.3	3	42.8	7	33.3	5	28.6	0	0.0	5	22.7
Partially Met	0	0.0	1	14.2	1	4.7	7	33.3	0	0.0	7	31.8
Did Not Meet	3	33.3	2	28.6	5	23.8	3	14.3	0	0.0	3	13.3
Total	14	100	7	100	21	100	20	100	2	100	22	100

Note: Music – Jazz/Popular Music Specialization not included in this table because results were not disaggregated by 100-/200-Level courses. Table L does not include Music – Jazz/Popular Music Specialization data either.

Table K. Written Communication Target Achievement by Sample Size: All Level Courses

	Number of Students	
	#	%
Exceeded	1364	40.1
Met	1018	29.9
Partially Met	275	8.1
Did Not Meet	744	21.9
Total	3401	100

Table L. Written Communication Target Achievement by Sample Size: 100-Level and 200-Level Courses

	100-Level Courses						200-Level courses					
	Programs		Disciplines		Overall		Programs		Disciplines		Overall	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Exceeded	879	61.8	51	5.1	930	38.4	315	38.2	119	100	434	46.0
Met	266	18.8	646	64.5	912	37.6	72	8.7	0	0.0	72	7.6
Partially Met	0	0.0	27	2.7	27	1.1	248	30.1	0	0.0	248	26.3
Did Not Meet	277	19.3	278	27.7	555	22.9	189	22.9	0	0.0	189	20.0
Total	1422	100	1002	100	2424	100	824	100	119	100	943	100

Note: Art History did not provide a target, therefore no data on whether target was met is included. Music – Jazz/Popular Music Specialization not included in this table because results were not disaggregated by 100-/200-Level courses.

Table M. Average Number of “Use of Results” per Discipline Group: 2017-2018

	Annual Reports Submitted	Total # of Use of Results	Average # of Use of Results
Program	33	207	6.27
Discipline	11	104	9.45
Total	44	311	7.06

Table N. Descriptions and Examples of Changes by Major Categories and Subcategories

Subcategory	Description and Examples
Curriculum Specific	
Curricular Change	Curricular change to degree program, e.g., added a course or other requirement; changed sequence of courses, paradigm shift—i.e., change in program focus based on industry standards and evolving technology; change in time schedule (when classes are offered); added courses on-line or in hybrid format; added/increased number of sections of a course to accommodate more students; coordinated course scheduling with other campuses, designing a common course syllabus, competitive admission, designing a common course curriculum
Course Revision	Revised existing course or courses; added or revised assignment, tests, readings, projects; modified assignment; modified course content, changed textbook; added or modified study guides, checklists, or other course handouts; revisited course topics for greater comprehension; emphasized/improved content; posted material online; added rubric; added review session or practice test; revised time spent on topic, remediation
Pedagogy	Revised methodology of delivering course material, e.g., less lecture, more student involvement, more interactive or experiential activities (lab) ; integrated learning technology (video, Blackboard), smaller class size, added or replaced some in person courses with on-line or hybrid courses (differs from offering entire degree program on-line); added peer learning methods
Pre-requisites	Changed entrance requirements to program, e.g., require completion of MTH 151 or ENG 111 before entering program; changed GPA requirement; requirement of computer competency test before program placed
Subject Matter Expert Feedback	Sought recommendations from external and internal stakeholders, e.g., employers, on-site clinical coordinator/supervisor, program advisory board/committee, accreditation body, faculty cluster
Program Resources	
Financial	Requested additional fiscal resources; allocated funds from other budget area to focus on achieving SLO
Human Resources	Provided faculty or adjuncts with development or training, e.g., faculty attend teaching workshops or conference to keep current with industry changes; hired new faculty
General Resources	Utilized external partners as guest speakers or resources for students; physical resources, e.g., new software, computers, open lab time, expansion of physical space
Co-curricular Resources	
Co-Curricular Opportunities	Coordinated opportunities to engage in learning outside classroom: e.g., faculty and student interaction outside classroom; optional field trips; internships (if not a part of course) social gatherings, career fairs, speakers, study sessions, participation in professional or student organizations
Academic Support/ Advising	Connected students with peer tutors; referred to NOVA Academic Support Resources like Writing Center, Science Lab, Math Lab; referred student to see academic advisor, counselor; improved or increased faculty advising and guiding students on degree related topics; program placement, transfer info sessions for 4 year colleges
SLO Assessment Process	
SLO Assessment Change	Changed or added to the assessment method for the SLO; broke out SLO components and assessed those individually

Data Analysis Method Change	Changed or modified data analysis method, e.g., developed a new rubric; added indirect measures such as surveys or student self-assessment
Student Learning Outcome Change	Refined or modified student learning outcome(s)
Target Increased	Increased target for success, e.g., increased the target number of students achieving a certain score on an assessment from 70% to 80%; increased the target assessment score from 60% to 70%
Target Decreased	Decreased target, e.g., decreased the target number of students achieving a certain score on an assessment from 90% to 80%; decreased the target assessment score from 100% to 90%
Target Clarified	Target was created/determined; target was revised or modified to be more clear or specific
Sample Size	Improved/increased sample size, e.g., assessed more sections of a course; assessed more courses for the same SLO; increased faculty/campus participation in assessment
Communication on Assessment Process	Communicated with faculty to clarify or revise the assessment process
College-Level	
Dual Enrollment	Allowed students to take program courses during high school
Articulation Agreement	Increased number of transferrable credits to specific 4-year institutions; Agreement with 4-year institutions to accept NOVA graduates
Recruitment/Marketing	Efforts to increase access, e.g., outreach to high schools, non-traditional students, non-declared students
Other	
Other	Please specify

Table O. "Use of Results" by Major Category: 2017-2018

"Use of Results" Major Categories												
	Curriculum-Specific		Program Resources		Co-Curricular Resources		Assessment Process		College-Level		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Program	90	43.4	8	3.86	27	13.0	81	39.1	1	0.5	207	100
Discipline	34	32.6	1	0.9	6	5.8	62	59.6	1	0.9	104	100
Total	124	39.9	9	2.9	33	10.6	143	45.9	2	0.6	311	100

Table P. "Use of Results" by Subcategory in Descending Order: 2017-2018

Subcategory	Number of Changes	% of Total
Course Revision	77	24.8%
Communication on Assessment Process	63	20.3%
Academic Support/Advising	32	10.3%
CLO Assessment Change	29	9.3%
Pedagogy	28	9.0%
Data Analysis Method Change	23	7.4%
Sample Size	23	7.4%
Curricular Change	12	3.9%
Subject Matter Expert Feedback	7	2.3%
General Resources	5	1.6%
Human Resources	3	1.0%

Target Increased	3	1.0%
CLO Change	2	0.6%
Recruitment/Marketing	2	0.6%
Financial	1	0.3%
Co-Curricular Opportunities	1	0.3%
Target Decreased	0	0.0%
Target Clarified	0	0.0%
Dual Enrollment	0	0.0%
Articulation Agreement	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
TOTAL	311	100.0%

Table Q. “Use of Results” by Subcategory: Curriculum-Specific

Use of Results Sub- Category: Curriculum-Specific Written Communication [2018-2019]								
	Curricular Change		Course Revision		Pedagogy		Subject-Matter Expert Feedback	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Program	1	8.3	62	80.5	22	78.6	5	71.4
Discipline	11	91.7	15	19.5	6	21.4	2	28.6
Total	12	100	77	100	28	100	7	100

Table R. “Use of Results” by Subcategory: Program Resources

Use of Results Sub- Category: Program Resources Written Communication [2018-2019]							
	Financial		Human Resources		General Resources		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Program	0	0.0	3	100	3	100	
Discipline	1	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Total	1	100	3	100	3	100	

Table S. “Use of Results” by Subcategory: Co-Curricular Resources

Use of Results Sub- Category: Co-Curricular Resources Written Communication [2018-2019]				
	Co-Curricular Opportunities		Academic Support/Advising	
	#	%	#	%
Program	0	0.0	27	84.4
Discipline	1	100	5	15.6
Total	1	100	32	100

Table T. "Use of Results" by Subcategory: Assessment Process

Use of Results Sub- Category: Assessment Process Written Communication [2018-2019]																
	CLO Assessment Change		Data Analysis Method Change		CLO Change		Target Increased		Target Decreased		Target Clarified		Sample Size		Communication	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Program	20	69.0	17	73.9	1	50.0	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	56.5	28	44.4
Discipline	9	31.0	6	26.1	1	50.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	43.5	35	55.6
Total	29	100	23	100	2	100	3	100	0	0.0	0	0.0	23	100	63	100

Table U. "Use of Results" by Subcategory: College-Level

Use of Results Sub- Category: College-Level Written Communication [2018-2019]						
	Dual Enrollment		Articulation Agreement		Recruiting/ Marketing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Program	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0
Discipline	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0
Total	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100

Appendix B: Written Communication Operationalized Definitions

Table A. Written Communication Operationalized Definitions by Programs

Program Name	Course Level Assessed	Operationalization
<i>Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, A.A.S.</i>	100	Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate by applying those written skills while writing the sequence of operations for 80% Natural Gas Furnace.
<i>Business Administration, A.S.</i>	100	Students will be able to describe the various theories related to the development of leadership skills, motivation techniques, teamwork and effective communication.
<i>Contract Management, A.A.S.</i>	100	Students will be able to conduct market research and write a report in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).
<i>Cybersecurity, A.A.S.</i>	100	Be able to identify correct syntax and logic in a programming language.
<i>Dental Assisting, A.A.S.</i>	100	Not Provided
<i>Engineering Technology, A.A.S.</i>	100	Students will be able to demonstrate interpersonal/human relations to promote and complete prescribed project tasks and meet project goals and objectives; the ability to evaluate evidence carefully and apply reasoning to decide what to believe and how to act.
<i>Graphic Design, A.A.S.</i>	100	Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate carefully and apply reasoning to decide what to believe and how to act.
<i>Horticulture Technology, A.A.S.</i>	100	Use of one written research paper from a required course for all students in the program.
<i>Information Technology, A.S.</i>	100	Be able to identify correct syntax and logic in a programming language.
<i>Music Recording Technology Certificate</i>	100	Explain current issues in copyright law.
<i>Paralegal Studies, A.A.S.</i>	100	Locate and prepare standard forms appropriate to specific legal problems.
<i>Personal Training, C.S.C.</i>	100	Students will consider the various factors that influence behavior and behavior modification decisions and create a plan to make a health behavior change.
<i>Professional Writing Certificate</i>	100	Employ correct fundamentals of English grammar, including punctuation, and basic logic of written communication.
<i>Respiratory Therapy, A.A.S.</i>	100	Students will demonstrate proficient skills in written communication by creating a document that focuses on content, organization, and style that will be evaluated using a rubric.
<i>Welding: Basic Techniques, C.S.C.</i>	100	Not provided
<i>Accounting, A.A.S.</i>	200	Write and speak English well enough to communicate accounting procedures and concepts in a professional environment.
<i>Architecture Technology, A.A.S.</i>	200	Humanities elective course provide opportunities for students to develop different form of communications. ARC 200 provides a significant opportunity to implement sketching skills side by side with written communication.

		Students will learn to effectively place notes with diagrams and tabulate key information.
<i>ASL to English Interpretation, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate an interpreting situation, choose the appropriate language/communication method, and manage the environment by writing responses to given scenarios.
<i>Automotive Technology, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students will perform preliminary inspections and procedures needed to prepare a vehicle for an alignment by checking and assessing vehicle ride height, tire condition, and inflation.
<i>Business Management, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students will be able to generate a summary report of sample data using graphics and descriptive measures.
<i>Computer Science, A.S.</i>	200	Perform elementary file and directory-related activities using command-line interfaces with different concepts, as developed to specifically address written communication.
<i>Construction Management Technology, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students are assessed on Written Communication. This will be an extension of SLO 3 which measures students' ability to communicate.
<i>Diagnostic Medical Sonography, A.A.S.</i>	200	Integrate patient history, current medical condition, and sonographic findings to provide accurate diagnostic information.
<i>Early Childhood Development</i>	200	Using the basic tenets of professionalism, and best practices, demonstrate one's growth and development.
<i>Health Information Management, A.A.S.</i>	200	Apply diagnosis/procedure codes according to current guidelines (I.A.); Understand appropriate application of ICD-10-CM/PCS coding guidelines; Apply the principles for coding healthcare data using ICD-1-CM/PCS; Accurately assign codes to diseases, conditions and procedures.
<i>Information Systems Technology, A.A.S.</i>	200	Be able to define normalization and define why it is necessary in the creation of a relationship database.
<i>Interior Design</i>	200	Written communication has been evaluated based on a portion of a final project in which students are to describe their project intent through the development of a concept statement.
<i>Marketing, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students will be able to communicate effectively to the press and employees in both oral and written format with grammatical accuracy.
<i>Medical Laboratory Technician, A.A.S.</i>	200	Demonstration of ability to develop, convey and exchange ideas in written communication for laboratory professionals.
<i>Occupational Therapy Assistant, A.A.S.</i>	200	Effectively document using electronic medical records and written documentation in order to best ensure effective communication with colleagues, other health professionals, administration, and reimbursement agencies.
<i>Photography and Media, A.A.S.</i>	200	Students will write a research project aimed at identifying career options in the field.
<i>Social Science: Geospatial Specialization, A.S.</i>	200	Evaluation of basic writing skills on the final report of the class project.
<i>Music, A.A., A.A.A., & A.A.A. Jazz/Popular Music Specialization</i>	100 & 200	Students will be able to effectively research and write on topics in the area of music/jazz and popular music.

Table B. Written Communication Operationalized Definitions by Disciplines

Discipline Name	Course Level Assessed	Operationalization
Art History	100	Students were required to produce a well-organized and well-written piece of formal art criticism.
Chemistry	100	Using a rubric, students' ability to write a scientific lab report with correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar will be measures. Students will discuss the results collected from an experiment in a chemistry laboratory by writing a report to support their experimental data.
Communication	100	Students will analyze the various components of a presentation through the development of a written outline.
English	100	Students will apply the fundamental elements of [rhetoric and/or craft] to produce writing that is clear, effective, and appropriate to the nature of their assignment.
History	100	Students will communicate effectively in historical writing by development a thesis, using supporting evidence, and utilizing proper writing mechanics.
Mathematics	100	Students' submission of a 3-4 sentence reflection on an Excel project or assignment, showing that the student has thought about the actual information on the assignment and the results of their work.
Philosophy	100	Students will be able to organize the appropriate factual content in a clear essay that relates to other material in the class and their experience.
World Languages – Chinese	100	Students will answer questions about short, predictable, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics.
World Languages – Spanish	100	Students will write loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events and other personal topics.
Geography	200	Not provided
Psychology	200	Students will demonstrate written and/or oral communication skills on topics within the study of psychology.

Appendix C: Codes for Target Data

Table A. Target Codes

Category	Description
Operationalization (O)	Program/discipline provided an operationalized definition of the CLO that was clear and measurable; includes actions students will take to learn this outcome (e.g., demonstrate proficiency in, analyze data, interpret information, etc.)
Sample Size	<i>SSS – Small Sample Size</i> Samples with 33 students or under.
	<i>MSS – Medium Sample Size</i> Samples between 34 and 69 students.
	<i>LSS – Large Sample Size</i> Samples over 70 students.
Outcome-Method Match (OMM)	Method/assignment the program/discipline used effectively measures the operationalized CLO.
Rubric/Measure	<i>Rubric in APER (R)</i> Separate Rubric/assessment measure and/or grading scale was not provided but was explained in the <i>APER</i> .
	<i>No Rubric Provided (NRP)</i> No rubric was provided either with the <i>APER</i> submission email or in the <i>APER</i> .
	<i>Assignment-Specific Rubric (ASR)</i> Rubric primarily evaluates the CLO being assessed and one or both of the following aspects: 1. Clear description of grading criteria/grading scale is provided 2. Provides purpose of assignment
	<i>Generic Rubric (GR):</i> Does not evaluate the CLO being assessed, is vague/not clear, grading scale not provided, no purpose presented.
Examination	<i>Outcome-Specific Examination (OS):</i> The exam questions evaluate the assessed CLO by addressing 3 or more aspects of the CLO.
	<i>Generic Examination (OFF):</i> The exam questions do not fully evaluate the assessed CLO. Only assessed 2 or less of the concepts and/or is vague/unclear.
Target	<i>Criteria Target (CTA)</i> Target was met in 75% of the criteria, but not overall.
	<i>Overall Target (OT)</i> Target was met overall.
Other (OTH)	

Appendix D: Mathematics Rubric

Students submission of a 3-4 sentence reflection on an Excel project or assignment, showing that the student has thought about the actual information on the assignment and the results of their work.

Rubric:

Reflection	No reflection, incomplete sentences, or significant errors in reasoning	Minor errors in reasoning or expression, or incomplete analysis of assignment	Three to four well-written sentences that exhibit thought about the actual information on the assignment and relate to the results of the work
Grading	0 points	1 point	2 points

Appendix E: Spanish Rubric

**SPA 101 SLO for Writing
Evaluation Criteria
Spring 2019**

	4	3	2	1
TASK COMPLETION	All required components from writing prompt are included.	Most required components from writing prompt are included.	Some required components from writing prompt are included.	Few or no required components from writing prompt are included.
CONTENT	All ideas and details are relevant and interesting.	The main idea has been conveyed but lacks relevant details to support it.	The main idea is unclear and the details supporting it are irrelevant.	The main idea is unclear and there is no evidence of details to support it.
VOCABULARY	There is a wide range of vocabulary words used in an accurate manner.	There is an adequate range of the vocabulary words with some errors in usage.	There is a limited range of vocabulary words with errors.	There is a small range of vocabulary, erroneous usage and translation-based errors.
GRAMMAR	Grammatical functions are used correctly with very few errors that do not interfere with meaning.	Grammatical functions are used adequately with some errors.	There are significant mistakes in grammar that interfere with meaning.	Simple sentence construction is lacking as well as knowledge of basic grammar.
SPELLING AND MECHANICS	There are very few errors in spelling, punctuation and capitalization.	There are some errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	There are frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	Mistakes in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization distort meaning.

Does not meet expectations: 0-8 points

Approaches expectations: 9-13 points

Meets expectations: 14-18 points

Exceeds expectations: 19-20 points

Appendix F: Interior Design Rubric

	Novice	Learner	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Writing Ability					
Grammatical Correctness (10 pts)	Concept statement has many syntax errors, poor use of punctuation, and/or run on sentences. Sentences do not have subject/verb agreement or do not have a subject or verb. (2 pt)		Concept statement has a few syntax or punctuation errors and sentence structure is generally correct. (6 pt)		Concept statement has no syntax or punctuation errors and words flow correctly as the statement is read. (10 pt)
Spelling (10 pts)	There are numerous spelling errors (5 or more). (2 pt)		Spelling is generally correct, only a few errors. (6 pt)		Spelling is correct. (10 pt)
Concise (5 pts)	The concept statement is too long or too short to adequately describe the project. (1 pt)		The concept is somewhat concise, but a little trimming or reorganization would improve the statement. (3 pt)		The concept is concise and clear enough to convey the design intent of the project. (5 pt)
Design Intent					
Locale/Setting (25 pts)	The location of the project is not mentioned or described in the concept statement. (5 pt)		The location of the project is mentioned in the concept statement and an attempt has been made to relate the locale to the project. (15 pt)		The location of the project is described very well in the concept statement and clearly relates to the design concept. (25 pt)
Atmosphere (25 pts)	The concept statement does not create the atmosphere for the setting of the project. (5 pt)		The concept statement starts to create the atmosphere for the project, but could be better developed. (15 pt)		The concept statement creates a clear atmosphere for the project. (25 pt)
Vision (25 pts)	The vision for the project is not clear. (5 pt)		The vision for the project is somewhat clear but could be further developed. (15 pt)		The vision for the project is very clear. (25 pt)

Appendix G: Meeting Written Communication Targets Infographic

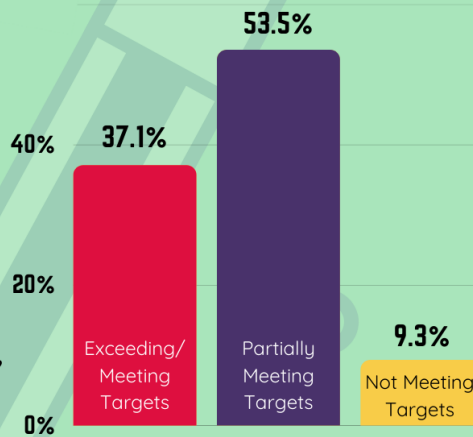
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

4,801
students participated in the 2018-2019 Written Communication assessment.*

3,860
students participated from 100-level Courses

941
students participated from 200-level Courses

HOW WERE STUDENTS DOING IN 2018-2019?



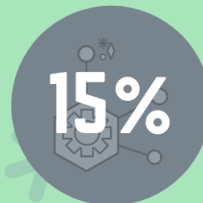
Based on the 2018-2019 Assessments,
NOVA DEFINES WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AS...



Explanation & Description



Supporting Material



Organization & Structure



Writing Mechanics



Tone



Conceptual Understanding



Analysis/ Interpretation

Appendix H: Working Group List of Registrants

Pathway	Program/Discipline
Business and Hospitality Management	-
Education and Public Service	Early Childhood Development
Engineering and Applied Technology	-
General Studies, General Education, Global Studies	-
Health Sciences	-
Information and Engineering Technology	-
Languages	Dean
	English
	World Languages
Life Sciences	-
Liberal Arts and Communication	-
Mathematics and Computer Science	-
Nursing and Surgical Technologies	-
Physical Sciences	-
Social Sciences	-
Visual, Performing, and Media Arts	Interior Design

Appendix I: Written Communication Assignment Recommendations

Based on the 2018-19 analysis of program and discipline assessment methods, the following assignments are recommended to best assess written communication and are accompanied by information about how to incorporate them into the program/discipline course:

- Writing Assignment: ask students to write an essay or formal document as it relates to the course and can be applied to their field (e.g., literary analysis for English courses, a laboratory report/research paper for sciences/social sciences, etc.).
- Statements: have students write short descriptions (i.e. statements) on a project that highlights the important aspects of the project. This helps students learn to write concisely, while also providing important information.
- Webpage/Blog: task students with documenting and applying concepts they have learned throughout the duration of the course/semester in the form of a blog.
- Digital Media: have students find news/research in any form of digital media (e.g., news articles, videos, podcasts) as it relates to concepts covered in the course and write a brief summary of the article and any insights/inferences they have.

PATHWAY TO THE AMERICAN DREAM—NOVA'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2023

THE NOVA COMMITMENT

As its primary contributions to meeting the needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Northern Virginia Community College pledges to advance the social and economic mobility of its students while producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To deliver on this commitment NOVA will focus its creativity and talent, its effort and energy, and its resources and persistence, on achieving three overarching goals—success, achievement, and prosperity. It will strive to enable **Every Student to Succeed, Every Program to Achieve, and Every Community to Prosper.**

To advance the completion agenda described above, thereby promoting students' success and enhancing their social mobility, ensuring that programs achieve, and producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century, the following goals and objectives are adopted:

GOAL 1: Every Student Succeeds

- **Objective 1:** Develop a College-wide approach to advising that ensures all students are advised and have access to support throughout their time at NOVA
- **Objective 2:** Implement VIP-PASS System as the foundational technology based on NOVA Informed Pathways for student self-advising, assignment and coordination of advisors, and course registration

GOAL 2: Every Program Achieves

- **Objective 3:** Develop comprehensive, fully integrated Informed Pathways for every program to ensure seamless transitions from high school and other entry points to NOVA, and from NOVA to four-year transfer institutions or the workforce
- **Objective 4:** Develop effective processes and protocols for programmatic College-wide collective decisions that include consistent, accountable leadership and oversight of each academic program with designated "owners," active advisory committees, clear student learning outcomes and assessments, and program reviews in all modalities of instruction
- **Objective 5:** Align NOVA's organizational structures, position descriptions, and expectations for accountability with its overarching mission to support student engagement, learning, success and institutional effectiveness

GOAL 3: Every Community Prospers

- **Objective 6:** Enhance the prosperity of every community in Northern Virginia by refocusing and prioritizing NOVA's workforce development efforts
- **Objective 7:** Further develop NOVA's IT and Cybersecurity programs to support regional job demand and position NOVA as the leading IT community college in the nation
- **Objective 8:** Re-envision workforce strategies and integrate workforce development into a NOVA core focus
- **Objective 9:** Plan to expand the breadth and reach of NOVA's healthcare and biotechnology programs, and prioritize future programs to support regional economic development goals

NOVA

**Northern Virginia
Community College**

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