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Edward M. White

The Scoring of Writing Portfolios: Phase 2

Although most portfolio evaluation currently uses some adaptation of holistic scoring, the problems with scoring portfolios holistically are many, much more than for essays, and the problems are not readily resolvable. Indeed, many aspects of holistic scoring work against the principles behind portfolio assessment. We have from the start needed a scoring methodology that responds to and reflects the nature of portfolios, not merely an adaptation of essay scoring. I here propose a means for scoring portfolios that allows for relatively efficient grading where portfolio scores are needed and where time and money are in short supply. It is derived conceptually from portfolio theory rather than essay-testing theory and supports the key principle behind portfolios, that students should be involved with reflection about and assessment of their own work. It is time for the central role that reflective writing can play in portfolio scoring to be put into practice.

Assessment of writing by portfolios has gone through several developments since it emerged in the early 1990s, after the publication of several essays by Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff describing the program at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and a volume of descriptive essays edited by Belanoff and Marcia Dixon. As with most innovations in writing measurement, it began with a great sense of enthusiasm and discovery, despite its long history of

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use in the fine arts. Portfolios appeared to resolve many of the problems that had become evident with essay testing: the validity problem of using only one or at most two impromptu writing samples, the absence of opportunities for the writer to reflect and revise, the lack of context or audience for the writing, inappropriate or banal writing prompts, and so on. Portfolios supported teaching, fostered revision, and offered much increased validity by using multiple writing samples over an extended period of time. Teachers who hated grading welcomed portfolios as a way to delay or even ignore that unpleasant task, although there was nothing inherent in portfolios opposed to paper grading; teachers committed to teaching writing as a process rejoiced to find an assessment tool that welcomed drafts as well as final copies.

The next development began with the questions raised at the writing portfolio conference at Miami University in 1993 and contained (or at least mentioned) in the book from that conference (Black, Daiker, Sommers, and Stygall). After the first year or two of uncritical use of portfolios, problems were beginning to emerge: the high cost of scoring, uncertainty about the authorship of the contents, low reliability among raters, and so on. By the late 1990s, several articles and book chapters had continued to raise questions, for example, Richard Larson in the MLA book *Assessment of Writing* (White, Lutz, and Kamusikiri) and my CCC article arguing that portfolios are essentially a much-expanded essay test rather than a writing-assessment panacea (“An Apologia”). But portfolios have proved to be a robust methodology and these questions have on the whole been met by particular assessments in special ways (e.g., Yancey and Huot; Yancey and Weiser; Haswell). The advantages of portfolio assessment have overridden its problems, and as we move into the twenty-first century portfolios have achieved standing as the writing-assessment method of choice. When time and resources permit, and leadership is well informed, a writing assessment today will be a portfolio assessment. (For a much more detailed history, consult Hamp-Lyons and Condon, particularly Chapter 1.)

One particular strength of portfolio assessment is its capacity to include reflection about the portfolio contents by the students submitting portfolios. Most such assessments require the portfolio to open with a “reflective letter” or “cover letter” in which the owner of the portfolio comments about the products or the processes shown in it. This reflective letter, normally mentioned in passing as one among many features by those working with portfolios, has the

power to turn a mere collection of materials into a unified and important document. When we think about portfolios, we cannot but consider reflection; it is no accident that the most vigorous proponent of portfolio assessment, Kathleen Blake Yancey, has written an important book about the various definitions and educational force of reflection as part of writing instruction: *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*. When a student introduces a portfolio with serious reflection about it, the student is taking responsibility for the quality of the work, the choices that were involved in the writing, and the learning that has occurred—or not occurred. It is a powerful metacognitive act—thinking about thinking—that no other assessment device includes. But one link in our own thinking about portfolios yet remains, and that is the purpose of this paper: to connect the power of the reflective letter to the actual scoring of portfolios.

One underlying and intransigent problem with portfolio assessment has remained, despite all the advances in portfolio theory and practice: almost all such assessments are scored holistically, using the system developed for essay testing by the Educational Testing Service in the 1960s. This assessment method has worked well enough for single essays, indeed well enough to

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have been imported without much question to become the standard method of portfolio scoring. But the problems with scoring portfolios holistically are many, much more than for essays, and they are not readily resolvable. Indeed, many aspects of holistic scoring work against the principles behind portfolio assessment. We have from the start needed a scoring methodology that responds to and reflects the nature of portfolios, not merely an adaptation of essay scoring.

I here propose a means for scoring portfolios that has developed over the last few years and that reflects a period of trial and error in practice. It allows for relatively efficient grading where portfolio scores are needed and where time and money are in short supply. At the same time, it is derived conceptually from portfolio theory, rather than essay-testing theory, and supports the key principle behind portfolios, that students should be involved with reflection about and assessment of their own work. It is time for the central role that reflective writing can play in portfolio scoring to be put into practice.

To be sure, we must recognize that portfolios—a collection concept, not an assessment concept—take many different shapes for many different purposes, and therefore will require many variations for scoring. Some portfolios

are not designed for assessment at all and such uses are outside the scope of this article; others may not be concerned with reflection and will find my focus

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on the reflective letter inappropriate. But most portfolio assessments are much in need of a scoring method that is theoretically consistent, efficient, and economical, a method I propose here as Phase 2 portfolio scoring. Since

I am here proposing a substantial change from current scoring practice, we need to start by summarizing the problems that this change would resolve.

Problems with Scoring Portfolios Holistically

Holistic scoring was developed by the Educational Testing Service around the middle of the twentieth century in order to solve the twin problems historically undermining the direct assessment of writing: unreliable, that is, inconsistent, scoring and high cost. Senior researcher Paul Diederich showed how to handle both problems for a single piece of writing, as he describes his groundbreaking research in *Measuring Growth in English* (1974). He required his large number of essay readers, representing many writing-oriented professions, to give a “general impression” score, after a quick reading, and he found that the readers could do this at a rapid enough pace to make essay scoring financially feasible. But the range of scores given to each piece of writing was so great that the scores were not meaningful. He attacked this second problem by a statistical operation called factor analysis, through which he discovered that the readers divided into five different groups, each using a different set of intuitive scoring criteria. Within each grouping, the scores were sufficiently consistent. If somehow all readers for a particular essay would use the same set of defined criteria for their general-impression scoring, then, he posited, we would have reliable essay-test readings at reasonable cost.

From this research came the familiar apparatus of holistic essay scoring, designed to keep all readers of an essay using the same set of scoring criteria: controlled essay readings, preceded by training sessions designed to inculcate the same set of scoring guidelines (sometimes called a “rubric”) for the particular essay topic assigned; sample papers illustrating the various score points; public discussion of the ways in which the sample papers illustrated those score points (often with subtle or not-so-subtle pressure to conform to the majority view); and recordkeeping to see to it that readers generally agreed on scores and did not dilly-dally during the time set for the reading. As Diederich predicted, these methods produced quick and reliable essay scoring and swept

the country in a remarkably short time, promoted mainly by English teachers (like me) convinced that we could replace the ubiquitous multiple-choice usage tests then in general use with real writing by students, scored by real writing teachers. And, for perhaps a decade, we did.

This story has been told before, in considerable detail (Williamson and Huot; White, *Teaching* 270–83), and I only summarize it here to point out how far from its base holistic scoring has wandered when applied to portfolios. To be sure, the very success of holistic scoring quickly led to its misapplication and overgeneralization. Note that the methodology was designed for the scoring of a particular essay assignment, often with criteria that were question-specific: “Were all three parts of the question answered? Did the student notice the ironies in the given passage? Did the student notice that both meanings of the term ‘sophisticated’—negative as well as positive—were active in the reading?” Further, the reliable scoring of the particular student response applied only to that particular piece of writing and might—or might not—reveal anything about the student’s ability to write to other questions or in other modes of discourse. But almost imperceptibly and very quickly holistic scoring began to take on much larger meanings and importance than its developers imagined.

Before long, holistically scored impromptu essay responses were being used for all kinds of measurements: to certify high school or even college graduates, to place students into college writing programs, to evaluate the quality of entire writing programs, even to influence admission into graduate business, medical, and chiropractic schools. A scoring methodology that worked well for defined essay questions, when applied sensitively and collegially by a coherent faculty group, had expanded into a one-size-fits-all scoring system delivering reliable grades for many, sometimes quite inappropriate, purposes. It is no surprise that a professional reaction set in, questioning the validity of scores so derived for such a wide variety of uses. Nonetheless, its ability to deliver reliable scores is so powerful that it has remained the methodology of choice for any student writing evaluation, including portfolios. See, for example, the portfolio scoring guide from Miami University, one of the best of its kind, in the appendix to my *Teaching and Assessing Writing* (300–03). Other well-known portfolio programs, such as the one from Washington State University (Haswell) and the current program at Carleton College, wrestle with the problem of consistency or inconsistency across different pieces and genres, but the final scoring represents at best an uneasy compromise of values. Which genres are the most important and hence have the most weight? What does a passing score really represent?

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No matter how we adapt it for scoring the varied contents before us, holistic scoring is particularly unsuited for evaluation of portfolios. How can a scoring system designed to record a reader's "general impression" of a single essay, guided by a question-specific scoring guide, apply to two or more different pieces of writing of different genres, purposes, and quality? Do we attempt to average the high quality of a personal narrative with the low quality of a research paper? What do we do with the terrible sonnet included after the competent short story? And what about the lab report we cannot understand or even the analysis of a novel we have not read?

At present, there are two ways of dealing with these problems, both quite unsatisfactory. Either we grade the entire portfolio by averaging evaluations of the different components, more or less intuitively, or we develop a scoring guide listing traits that must appear somewhere (but not everywhere) in the portfolio: reasonably edited copy, appropriate use of sources, development of ideas, and so on. Whichever system is used, problems bedevil the reading. For instance, the surface matters that holistic scoring attempted to reduce in importance are likely to resurface with more weight as mechanical traits recurring from item to item, while the rhetorical and critical-thinking abilities that holistic scoring tried to emphasize become more difficult to identify consistently. We muddle through somehow this way, though reliabilities usually are much lower than for single essays, and report our scores with some misgivings. What else are we to do, since we value the production of the portfolios as important for student learning and we have no other way of developing scores?

Keys to Phase 2: Goals Statements and the Reflective Letter

But there is another way to score portfolios, much more in tune with the purpose and design of portfolio assessment. This method requires the development of two new documents as part of the assessment: first, a set of goals set by faculty for the particular course, program, or purpose for which the portfolio is submitted; and, second, a reflective letter to readers composed by the student, an argument showing that those goals have been met (or, perhaps, not met), using the portfolio contents as evidence. Although these do not appear at first to be particularly novel developments, when used together they completely change the nature of portfolio assessment, and for the better in every sense. Since a Phase 2 portfolio assessment requires the student to con-

struct the reflective letter in response to the goals statement, we need to consider that document first.

The Need for Clear Statements of Goals

Two important differences between the traditional use of portfolios in the fine arts and the innovative use of portfolios in writing assessment developed as soon as writing portfolios became widely used: fine arts portfolios were selected to represent the *best* work produced by the student, while writing portfolios tended to require *representative* work, including early drafts and less successful products; and while fine arts portfolios included the best products of the student, which spoke for themselves, writing portfolios often asked the student to preface the collection with some form of reflective letter, as discussed already. The first of these differences reflected the concepts of process theories of writing instruction, allowing the reader of the portfolio to note and value the learning as well as the best products of the student. The second difference was loosely based on metacognitive theories of learning, asking the student to think about the learning that the portfolio demonstrated. It is surprising that those working with and writing about portfolio assessment, including me, have failed to appreciate fully the major importance of these differences, even though these are the theoretical underpinnings of writing portfolio assessment itself.

Both of these matters—the selection of portfolio content and the criteria for the reflective letter—are key to the second phase of portfolio assessment and both depend on careful consideration of the goals of the assessment. I will not say much here about the first, since it is obvious that the content of the portfolio should reflect its purpose: for instance, a course portfolio should probably contain the most important papers written for the course, including drafts and outlines, while an outcomes assessment for an English major should contain enough term papers in final draft for the readers to assess whatever the goals of the major happen to be. But it may not be as obvious that both decisions, about the contents and about the student reflective letter, depend on a clear understanding of the goals of the assessment, and that those goals are a decision calling for careful consultation among the faculty and careful writing of a document for the students.

That is, a portfolio presented for assessment is essentially a collection of evidence for an argument, in the rhetorical sense. What does the evidence demonstrate? In most cases at present, that crucial matter is left unstated,

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somehow to be worked out by the readers of the portfolio during the scoring session, with the unsteady assistance of a holistic scoring guide. But Phase 2 portfolio scoring requires that the goals for the portfolio assessment be well understood from the start by the students submitting their work as well as by the readers doing the scoring. In that case, the portfolio content constitutes evidence that the student will use to argue that the goals of the assessment, and hence the goals of the course or program, have been met, in whole or in part. Thus the student needs to have a document stating these goals, and probably some explanation of that document, in hand from the very beginning of the production of the portfolio. And then the reflective letter the student prepares after the portfolio has been compiled becomes the overt argument, using the portfolio content as evidence, that the goals have been met, at least in part. If the evidence does not demonstrate that the goals have been met, the reflective letter can discuss why and, if the discussion demonstrates powerful thinking about that issue, the portfolio might still receive a high grade. For these reasons, a goals statement, developed by the faculty who will score the portfolios, and well understood by the students preparing the portfolios, is essential for Phase 2 portfolio grading. Indeed, some will argue that a clear understanding of one's goals is crucial for responsible teaching itself, a matter that goes beyond our discussion here.

Appendix A gives four examples of goals statements for portfolio outcomes assessments, that is, assessments of the writing abilities students were supposed to develop in the programs involved. The first is from the English department of California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), the second is a very brief one from the first-year writing program at Northern Arizona University (NAU), the third is a very extensive one from the first-year writing program at Arizona State University (based in large part on the Outcomes Statement developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators), and the fourth is from the department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Arizona (ECE). While the four statements are widely different in many respects, each of them was developed in a similar way. The faculty of the departments involved agreed in the first instance to put together a goals statement; they spent a substantial amount of time, well over a year, debating the important issues involved and putting together a satisfactory statement; and they tested the goals statement, refining it as they went, over the first few years of implementation. Their interest was multidirectional. The assessment sought to determine how many, if any, students completing the program with acceptable course grades had not in fact met the goals of the

program. At the same time, they were even more concerned about the effectiveness of the program than they were about the abilities of the students; that is, if students completing the program with good grades had still not met program goals, despite meeting program requirements, the faculty was interested in program changes that would more fully help or require students to meet those goals. In each case, after completing the portfolio assessment, the faculty readers spent considerable amounts of time considering what the experience had taught them about the program itself.

Before the portfolio assessment, the department had no way of knowing—aside from course grades and anecdotes—whether students completing the major had met the goals for the major. The assessment seeks to provide that information.

For instance, the goals statement for the English major at CSUSB reflects the typical “big tent” English department, including linguistics, creative writing, and composition, as well as literature. Students have considerable latitude in choosing courses that fit within the structure of the various tracks. Before the portfolio assessment, the department had no way of knowing—aside from course grades and anecdotes—whether students completing the major had met the goals for the major. The assessment seeks to provide that information. The students are informed that no one student is likely to have met all the goals of the department, but that they should demonstrate that they have met most of the goals. The department was encouraged to find that most students had indeed met most of the goals. But programmatic problems emerged, as readers reflected on their portfolio-reading experience. One of the stated goals, for example, reflects current concern about literary theory. Students completing the CSUSB English major should be able to demonstrate an awareness that there is no single “correct” way to read a piece of literature, but rather that there is a variety of ways to read depending on the literary theory or theories one adopts. The goals statement put it simply: Students are expected “to know that literature can be studied in a variety of ways, and to be familiar with some of these critical approaches.” After the first few portfolio readings, the faculty recognized that this goal was not in fact being met by most graduating seniors. Few students understood the role or the importance of theory and most of them continued to believe that there was one “best” way to read a literary work—usually the teacher’s. This realization led to a series of faculty meetings about more effective ways to help students meet this goal, and then to a revision of requirements for the major.

A second aspect of the curriculum came under review after the portfolio

readers observed that the portfolios contained almost no papers over six pages in length. There were many reasons for this, including a heavy faculty workload, students who needed to work to support themselves in college and had limited time for school work, and the compression of a ten-week quarter system. Nonetheless, the department decided to take steps to ensure that graduating senior English majors would have some experience writing longer papers. Yet another recent discovery, that many graduates had been assigned *The Great Gatsby* in three different courses, led to additional curricula discussions and revisions.

The CSUSB example demonstrates the value of shaping a departmental outcomes portfolio assessment around a carefully developed goals statement. Such a statement as a key part of the assessment makes clear that an English major is not merely a collection of distinct courses, but is also a coherent program designed to impart certain abilities and ways of thinking. It also turns an outcomes assessment into a program assessment as well as an evaluation of individual student performance.

The last item in the appendix is a goals statement for writing from an unlikely source, a department of Electric and Computer Engineering, but it demonstrates the flexibility and power of Phase 2 portfolio assessment. The ECE department at the University of Arizona, keenly aware of the need for its graduates to be able to write competently, adopted these goals after much internal debate. The goals are made clear to students early on in their studies and an increasing number of faculty are designing assignments that will help

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students meet the goals. The preparation of the portfolio with its reflective letter is part of a senior-level required course, and the scoring of the portfolios follows a scoring guide that focuses on that letter. ECE faculty do the scoring, with a few additional raters from a major local engineering firm and with professional leadership. Each portfolio receives two independent scores, with about 10 percent requiring a resolution reading, and the entire reading is accomplished in a morning.

An additional bonus for this kind of portfolio assessment is the positive response to it from faculty and students. With the focus of the assessment on the degree to which the student's reflective letter demonstrates awareness of and accomplishment of the goals, portfolio reading can proceed relatively quickly and with high levels of agreement. The assessment makes sense to the readers and also to the students, who find the entire operation a useful, even a

creative, way to envision the studies they have completed. “I never realized how much I have learned, since I was just interested in passing courses,” students will say. “Now I see that every course was part of an overall program.” The most effective part of the portfolio in helping students to come to that realization is the reflective letter, to which we now turn.

The Importance of the Student Reflective Letter

Phase 2 portfolio scoring depends heavily on the student reflective letter, a document that many students find difficult to prepare, since few of them are accustomed to thinking of their own written work as evidence of learning, or to taking responsibility for their own learning. The four programs whose goals are listed in the appendix have found it necessary to provide instructional support for students writing this letter. CSUSB requires a one-unit course for seniors preparing their portfolios, while NAU, ASU, and ECE include the preparation of the portfolio as an important part of the required course curriculum. If this support is not provided to students, they will not take the portfolio or the reflective letter as seriously as they need to, often hastily putting it together at the last moment with a quick and superficial unreflective reflective letter. Indeed, the increasing use of portfolios in many different contexts has led to a destructive pattern of writing, since most programs and teachers do not attend much to the reflective letter: without instruction, students are likely to give a hasty overview of the portfolio contents, including much personal experience about the difficulty of writing and revising—along with some fulsome praise of the teacher—without attending to the goals of the program at all. But when sufficient faculty attention is given to the demands of the portfolio, and to genuine reflection in the letter, the effort is rewarding to students as well as to the portfolio readers. In fact, in over three decades of experience with assessments

of writing, these portfolios are the only assessments I have known that students genuinely find interesting, useful, and worth doing. Students rarely care enough about tests to retrieve them after they receive grades. But these portfolios are valuable to students, who normally not only retrieve them after they are graded, but carry them to job interviews and preserve them as a record of their college years.

The reflective letters are of unusual importance when the portfolio assessment is at the program level, as in the ECE, ASU, and CSUSB examples. While faculty tend to envision programs and program-level goals, students are

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more focused on particular courses and professors. When the reflective letter requires them to consider what they have learned and accomplished in terms of the program, rather than of individual courses, they gain a new sense of responsibility for the choices they have made. While they may have chosen to take Modern Fiction instead of Advanced Composition for several reasons, including time of day and friendships in class, now they need to consider that course as part of their major and the outcomes of that course as part of their program outcomes. How, the reflective letter asks, have they spent their time and what have they gotten for that expenditure? If the program failed to meet their needs, they are quite ready to say so and to apportion (perhaps even avoid) responsibility. But they can no longer see their college careers as a random set of courses; they must somehow put them together, seek for coherence. If the program gave them many, perhaps too many, choices, as perhaps CSUSB did,

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they make recommendations for the future. If the program is highly structured, as ECE is, they are ready to evaluate that structure in terms of the program goals. But however the students proceed, they must think about and assess what they have done or not done, in terms of the goals statement that

has been before them for some years. In most cases, they much appreciate this opportunity to do mature reflection, even if they wind up condemning themselves, or the institution, for failing to measure up.

Similarly, when the portfolio reflects a single course, the reflective letter allows the students to evaluate the course in terms of their own experience of it. With their writing in front of them, they are less likely to praise or blame the teacher for what they did; more often than one would think they ask themselves what they got out of the course and why they didn't work harder to learn more.

Phase 2 Scoring

And so we return to Phase 2 scoring of portfolios, which is highly dependent on the reflective letter; indeed, which is based on careful reading of that reflective letter. If the materials in the portfolio have been graded and commented on by faculty already, as is often the case, those grades and comments should be included in the text presented. The argument that those comments and grades should be taken out depends on the assumption that portfolio readers are regrading everything in the portfolio; in that case, earlier notations inter-

ferre with new grading. But Phase 2 scoring does not intend or need to regrade papers that have already been read and commented on; its concern is the portfolio as a whole. It focuses on the reflective letter and the references in that letter to work in the portfolio as evidence for the argument in the letter. If one goal of the program is to show that the student has learned how to cite sources and then to use those sources as evidence (rather than as a substitute) for ideas, then the portfolio reader need only refer to the cited page of the portfolio to check on the student's argument that the page demonstrates that accomplishment; at most, a quick skimming of the full contents should suffice. The reader essentially grades the reflective letter, and the portfolio as evidence in that letter, as the portfolio grade.

Since in Phase 2 scoring, the reader is relieved of the necessity of giving new grades to each item in the portfolio, it is now possible to give a reliable and reasonably quick reading to the portfolios in hand. This may sound shocking to faculty used to spending, say, half an hour or more rereading and regrading student work in portfolios. But this has been the fallacy behind portfolio scoring from the start: rereading and putting grades on everything at hand. If the purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate that the student has achieved certain stated goals, the portfolio contents are important not as individual graded papers, but as part of the student's entire learning experience. Does the portfolio support the argument in a well-considered reflective letter? Has the student taken responsibility for evaluating his or her own work? Have course or program outcomes been achieved?

Now we can speak sensibly of scoring, even holistic scoring, of the reflective letter, which needs to meet certain quite specific criteria. We are back to a single document, the basic material for which holistic scoring was designed, and we can usually agree on the quality of that document, though we may disagree on the quality of the items in the portfolio that support that document. A well-written, reflective letter with partial or missing support in the portfolio will not receive a high grade, nor will a poorly written reflective letter with good support. With some labor, we can come up with a scoring guide and sample portfolios at various score points, just as we can do with single essays. The variation in the portfolio from item to item and from genre to genre is of no real importance now, since we can expect such variation over an extended period of time,

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with a great variety of kinds of writing to many different assignments, and we are not trying to average grades on the items but rather scoring the portfolio as a whole, from the perspective of the reflective letter.

And as we do so, we find that instead of scoring two portfolios an hour we are scoring from six to ten an hour, or more, and achieving substantial agreement on the grades. Phase 2 scoring wins on all counts. It reinforces the entire point of portfolios by making the assessor of first resort the student submitting the portfolio, who, in the reflective letter, performs the self-assessment that is the true goal of all academic assessment. The faculty assessment then focuses on that student assessment, which must be done in the light of clearly stated faculty goals, and evaluates the student's overall awareness and achievement of those goals. The faculty assessment can be done relatively quickly and responsibly, yielding reliable grades, at reasonable cost in time and effort. Furthermore, the entire experience is valuable in its own right. It supports student learning by requiring self-assessment and responsibility, provides direct information to faculty on the outcomes of their programs, and uses existing documents in a new way that is demonstrably direct and valid.

I do not mean to suggest that Phase 2 scoring is problem-free or the answer to all portfolio issues. As I have said, there will be portfolio assessments that do not seek to evaluate reflection, for various reasons. Again, the reflective letter is a genre itself, and a difficult one to do well; thus it adds a new burden to both the preparation and scoring of portfolios even as it simplifies measurement. There may well be important qualitative differences between the reflective letter and the content of the portfolio, and the scoring team will need to decide how to handle such differences consistently. There seem always to be students who will ignore course or program goals in their reflective letters, sometimes writing engaging personal narratives or flattering course evaluations that are hard to dismiss despite their avoidance of the task assigned. In writing assessment, every solution seems to bring forth new, if more interesting, problems, and Phase 2 scoring will no doubt need to be adapted to local conditions even where it is welcomed.

Nonetheless, while this system of grading portfolios is not necessarily appropriate for all the varied uses to which they are now put, Phase 2 scoring will be a major improvement for portfolio assessment in the vast majority of instances.

Appendix: Course and Program Goals

A. California State University, San Bernardino, Department of English Goals for English Majors:

- I. To be familiar with the major writers, periods, and genres of English and American literature, and to be able to place important works and genres in their historical context.
- II. To be able to analyze, interpret, and compare literary works, and to write about literature in a clear, coherent, literate way that demonstrates a high level of understanding both of a text's technical merits and of its emotional impact.
- III. To know that literature can be studied in a variety of ways, and to be familiar with some of these critical approaches.
- IV. To have read several important works in non-Western, ethnic, and women's literatures that illustrate the diversity of literary studies and the interconnectedness of literary traditions.
- V. To understand writing as process and, in their own writing, to demonstrate an awareness of audience, purpose, and various rhetorical forms as well as a high level of control of the conventions of standard written English.
- VI. To have some basic understanding of the phonological, morphological, and syntactic structures of English and their development, as well as to be familiar with theories of sociolinguistics and language acquisition.
- VII. In addition, students who are planning to teach English should be more specifically acquainted with pedagogical approaches to literature, language, and writing, and with the theories that underlie those approaches.
- VIII. Students taking the creative writing track are expected to be able to demonstrate a high level of competence in some genre of imaginative writing and the forms and techniques of that genre.

B. Northern Arizona University Goals for English 105

1. To develop critical reading skills through close attention to text content and to the skills needed to interpret texts effectively
2. To develop expository writing skills through attention to the writing process
3. To apply critical reading and writing skills to formal writing tasks, including an extended writing project
4. To develop technological literacy skills to rhetorically analyze online resources based on the audience addressed, the purpose explored, and the language used

C. Arizona State University Writing Programs Course Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

The composition program at ASU supports the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and Writing Program Administrators (WPA) outcomes for first-year composition students. The goals and objectives we have developed from these outcomes are provided here to help teachers better understand what materials and knowledge students will be expected to acquire in ASU Writing Programs courses. Since learning to write effectively is a complex task that requires lifelong practice, any composition class should never be seen as “the” course that will make the student an effective writer. Rather, any writing class, including our first-year courses, should be seen as a step toward gaining the strategies necessary to engage in that practice.

Rhetorical Knowledge

Our writing courses will focus on helping students develop and use a rhetorical framework to analyze writing situations, in a number of ways. Students will learn how to

- use heuristics to analyze places, histories, and cultures
- be aware of the components of argument and create their own arguments in conversation with other members of their discourse communities
- synthesize and analyze multiple points of view
- use a variety of argumentative strategies to write for a variety of audiences
- express a working knowledge of key rhetorical features, such as audience, situation, and the use of appropriate argument strategies
- adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- use conventions of format, structure, and language appropriate to the purpose of the written texts
- be able to focus on a specific rhetorical purpose

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

One of the key goals of our writing courses is to provide students with strategies to gather, analyze, and write about issues that are important to specific audiences in specific contexts. Students will learn to

- work with demanding, nonfiction readings and learn to interpret, incorporate, and evaluate these readings
- develop and support an argument that is convincing to a particular audience
- explore the multiple facets (ideological, social, cultural, political, economic, historical) of issues and to use writing to construct informed, critical positions about these topics

- engage in a variety of research methods to study and explore the topics, including fieldwork as well as library and Internet research
- write empirical, historical, and cultural analyses of issues of social relevance
- conduct inquiry-based research and writing which is driven by the desire to study a cultural phenomenon and asks, “What kind of research needs to be done in order to understand this issue?”
- analyze differing cultural and historical perspectives on issues so as to encourage students to understand that multiple perspectives on an issue are in operation at the same time. This analysis will help students to broaden and enhance their own perspectives on these issues.
- ascertain the significance of situation in adopting rhetorical strategies in their writings and readings
- identify the kind of ideological work a text undertakes and how it serves to persuade readers to accept a particular account of an issue as accurate and effective
- pursue an issue across projects in order to understand the complexity of the issue and to make connections between empirical, historical, and cultural aspects of an issue
- use writing as a way of thinking through topics and ideas

Processes

Our writing courses will focus on the writing process and will ask students to engage in a variety of practices to research, develop, and write their projects. During the course of the semester, students will learn to

- propose, plan, and undertake research projects that involve a number of writing activities that build toward a final project that meets the audiences’ needs
- interact with texts as they read and reread, by underlining, taking notes, and commenting in the margins, in order to arrive at a strong reading that supplies a starting point for writing
- write and revise drafts and integrate feedback into their writing
- engage in collaborative work at a variety of levels (research, invention, writing, etc.)
- better respond to audiences by revising work based upon feedback (peer response, teacher conferences) from others
- discuss readings, writings, and other kinds of research with others and use those discussions as brainstorming, invention, or revision exercises

- respond to their classmates' work and learn how to supply effective peer editing feedback. Peer response techniques include group workshops, class discussion, and examination of content, organization, syntax, and mechanics
- actively participate in class discussions about readings and writings
- engage with instructor, peers, and other members of the writer's audience in order to better understand and meet their needs and goals as readers

Conventions

We strive to teach students to analyze the writing conventions of different discourse communities and to begin to write effectively within these communities. Throughout the semester, students will learn to

- understand the ways that different discourse communities have different strategies for conveying information, for researching information, and for evaluating and analyzing information
- employ a variety of organizational tactics
- learn how to deploy supporting evidence
- analyze what audiences' expectations about conventions are and to address them in critical ways
- understand the ways that information technologies aid and change writing conventions
- examine the conventions of empirical, historical, and cultural writing and analyze and question those conventions
- effectively integrate a variety of sources into their writings
- use grammatical and mechanical conventions of a variety of discourses in appropriate ways
- learn and use at least one system of documentation responsibly

D. Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Arizona, Writing Outcomes

Graduates of the ECE Department should be able to

1. document a procedure, how something works, how to perform an operation, or how to solve a problem
2. write a clear and succinct definition of an open-ended problem including a summary of known attempts to solve the problem
3. write a proposal to perform a project, undertake research, develop a program, solicit funding, or some combination of the above

4. write an abstract or summary of a technical document
5. write a letter or memorandum taking a clear position defending or selling an idea to an audience
6. document a project in a professionally written design report
7. explain technical information to a nontechnical audience

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Edward M. White

Edward M. White has written or edited eleven books and about one hundred articles or book chapters on writing, writing instruction, and writing assessment. His best-known books are *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, whose second edition (1994) won an award from the MLA for “outstanding research in teaching,” and *Assessment of Writing: Politics, Policies, Practices* (1996). For ten years he was coordinator of the Writing Improvement Program for the California State University system; he has also served two terms on the CCCC Executive Committee. After retiring as professor of English at CSU San Bernardino he joined the University of Arizona English department, where he continues to teach graduate courses in writing assessment, writing research, and writing program administration. He has recently coedited a second edition of *Inquiry*, a writing text, and *Composition Studies in the New Millennium*, based on papers delivered at the 2001 WPA conference that took place less than a month after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.