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Education Division

**University of Hawai'i West O'ahu
Education Division**

2013-14

Division Assessment Report

**Institutional Learning Outcome#1:
Written Communication**

February 7, 2014

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The Bachelor of Education Degree (B.Ed)

Concentration in Elementary Education

Introduction

The University of Hawai'i West O'ahu Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree, with concentration in Elementary Education (K-6), is nationally recognized by the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI, 2012) and nationally accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2013). In accordance with its *Continuous Improvement* accreditation pathway, Division faculty assess student learning outcomes (SLOs) each semester via targeted signature assignments and field experience evaluations. SLOs are fully aligned with the following: 1) ACEI professional association standards (CLOs), 2) the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board/InTASC standards for the preparation of teachers (DLOs), and 3) the UHWO Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The purpose of these program-level assessments is to provide faculty with the opportunity to utilize data to inform practice. Effective April 15, 2014, all program assessment data will be accessible to the public at the UHWO website: [Accreditation/Education Division.CAEP link](#).

During AY 2013-14, UHWO faculty were charged with assessing, reporting, and reflecting upon data associated with Institutional Learning Outcome #1: Written Communication. Towards this end, Education Division faculty examined the impact of their teaching on student learning in four required Writing Intensive (WI) courses in the B.Ed curriculum:

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|----------|---|
| EDEF 310 | Foundations of American Education
Signature Assignment: <i>Philosophy of Teaching & Learning</i> |
| EDEE 424 | Elementary Language Arts Methods
Signature Assignment: <i>Case Study of a Struggling Literacy Learner</i> |
| EDEF 444 | Teaching Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Learners
Signature Assignment: <i>Case Study of a CLD Student</i> |
| EDEE 492 | Student Teaching Seminar
Signature Assignment: <i>Ethical Dilemmas</i> |

The following are the assessment procedures, results, and recommendations for the continuous improvement of the program.

Assessment Procedures

In accordance with UH West O'ahu policy on the structure of Writing Intensive (WI) courses (Faculty Handbook, 2013-14), teacher candidates completed a minimum of two drafts of their respective signature assignments. Instructors familiarized candidates with the recommended WI Rubric that was used to evaluate their signature assignments. Throughout the semester,

candidates submitted their papers in draft form, which in turn were responded to during workshops by instructors and peers. Candidates uploaded final drafts to their TaskStream electronic portfolio. Instructors then evaluated the papers, using the common WI rubric. Finally, the Education Division TaskStream Administrator collected and organized the data for distribution to instructors who, in turn, reflected upon the results and provided written recommendations for improving the signature assignment content and/or process. Education Division faculty met during the January 9, 2014 UHWO Professional Development Day to discuss the results of the WI assessments. As a result of this meeting, faculty made recommendations for overall WI course and program improvements, in the context of candidate written communication skills.

Assessment Findings

Table 1 is an Executive Summary of data collected from the four WI education courses in which Signature Assignments were assessed. The sample represents 31% of all Elementary Education majors (n=199).

Table 1

**UHWO Institutional Learning Outcome #1: Written Communication
Fall 2013 WI Assessment Data
Division of Education**

Executive Summary: EDEF 310; EDEE 424; EDEF 444; EDEE 492

UHWO WI Rubric Dimension	*Total n=	Range of scores	Mean	Standard deviation	Candidates who achieved target (2)
#1 Context & Purpose for Writing	62	1-2	1.78	.68	49 = 79%
#2 Content Development	62	0-2	1.65	.58	44 = 71%
#3 Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	62	0-2	1.56	.55	38 = 61%
#4 Sources & Evidence	62	0-2	1.60	.56	41 = 66%
#5 Control of Syntax & Mechanics	62	0-2	1.65	.51	42 = 68%

Discussion. The content and structure of each signature assignment ranged from describing a personal philosophy of teaching and learning to executing case studies to articulating, analyzing, and reflecting upon an ethical dilemma. While results were often content-specific, faculty nevertheless observed patterns of written communication skill levels that could be used to inform practice and to make course-level and programmatic recommendations. The following WI rubric *dimensions* frame our discussion of the results.

#1 Context & Purpose for Writing. Overall, teacher candidates performed best on this writing element, with 79% achieving a target score of “2” and 21% earning an acceptable rating of “1.” Qualitative analysis of the data revealed that candidates clearly understood the context, audience, and purpose for writing their signature assignments. Candidates least successful in achieving target were those who were unable to recognize ethical issues presented in a complex, multilayered context.

#2 Content Development. Seventy-one percent (71%) of candidates achieved target, while 27% earned an acceptable rating. One candidate’s performance in this area was deemed unacceptable. Candidates who struggled with content development failed to provide an in-depth analysis and discussion of the topic, as well as adequate linkage to course content under study (e.g., philosophy of teaching and learning; professional ethics; research-based literacy methods; the Prism Model).

#3 Genre and Disciplinary Conventions. Teacher candidates performed least well on this writing element, with 61% achieving target and 36% earning an acceptable score. Two students earned an unacceptable rating, due to writing that was unclear, confusing, or difficult to follow. Generally speaking, candidates attended to disciplinary conventions associated with each signature assignment. Target was not achieved when the writer failed to utilize appropriate essay style (philosophy paper), did not adequately support generalizations with relevant details (ethics paper), or omitted required sections of the paper (case study).

#4 Sources and Evidence. Sixty-six percent (66%) of candidates achieved target, and 30% earned an acceptable score. Three candidates earned unacceptable ratings for the following reasons: Complete omission of the required appendices and bibliography and/or inadequate citation of relevant sources. Instructors conveyed disappointment in the scores, given emphasis placed on the importance of utilizing resources to gather evidence in support of an argument or thesis.

#5 Control of Syntax and Mechanics. The percentage of candidates achieving target was 68%, with 31% earning an acceptable score. One candidate’s paper was rated unacceptable on this dimension. Instructors were also disappointed in these results. This being the second or third draft of the paper, syntax and mechanics errors should have been minimal. Typical errors noted across signature assignments were comma usage; vocabulary word choice; subject/verb agreement; run-on sentences; and sentence fluency/clarity.

Assessment Conclusions

Data reveals that the vast majority (92%) of teacher candidates achieved acceptable-to-target ratings on all dimensions of the WI rubric. Faculty nevertheless acknowledged areas for improving instruction in efforts to address candidate written communication needs, in the context of their respective signature assignments.

Recommendations

Based on data analysis, reflection, and discussion, Education Division faculty made the following recommendations intended to inform not only the signature assignment implementation process but also the continuous improvement of the B.Ed in Elementary Education.

WI Course Instructors will. . .

- provide focused assistance during class lectures and conversations to achieve a deeper understanding of course content.
- give increased attention to clarity and style in the draft process.
- model writing samples that illustrate conceptual understandings central to the assignment.
- offer more support for the identifying, structuring, and analyzing problems and their solutions (e.g., Ethical Dilemmas; Intervention Plans for struggling literacy learners).
- examine selected data collection to ensure relevancy and efficiency.
- require an additional proofreading, prior to submitting the final draft paper.
- emphasize the importance of attending to signature assignment guidelines and WI rubric dimensions, in order to meet the standards.

Education Division Faculty will. . .

- require that candidates referred to the No'eau Center seek one-on-one, in-person assistance, as opposed to online only help.
- provide No'eau Center staff with rubrics for all signature assignments, whenever a candidate is referred.
- follow up with candidates and with No'eau Center staff to determine the effectiveness of tutorial sessions.
- utilize the *Grades First* advising process to support candidates who struggle with written communication in any of their courses.