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SUBJECT: SAGES Portfolio Faculty Evaluation Committee Report

DATE: 27 June 2011

INTRODUCTION

The SAGES Portfolio Faculty Evaluation Committee, consisting of university faculty from Religious Studies, Modern Languages and Literatures, Physics, Music, Sociology, Banking and Finance, Cognitive Science, English, and SAGES, read and evaluated approximately 900 student writing portfolios submitted to the SAGES office between June 2010 and May 2011. The following report outlines the methodologies used during the evaluation process, provides the results of the committee's assessment of student writing, and offers suggestions to SAGES and English Department writing program administrators regarding classroom instruction and the SAGES portfolio requirement.

Our chief finding is that students demonstrate weakness in writing the kinds of thesis statements that are able to serve as strong controlling arguments throughout their essays. While students are adept at formulating supporting arguments – and while they demonstrate facility with presenting evidence in a clear and coherent fashion—they do not illustrate the ability to express or carry out positions indicative of compelling academic argumentation.

Among the committee's other significant findings are the following: Students are still waiting too long to submit their portfolios. The vast majority of portfolios submitted were from students graduating in May 2011 (see Appendix 4). This trend challenges Writing Program assessment in terms of the evaluation committee's ability to more fully interpret students' selection of essays as well as students' reflective assessment of those selections. The committee was pleased, however, to find that more students submitted argumentative papers from their courses for all three categories of essays (FSEM, USEM, and USEM research paper). We assume that these results indicate that more instructors are assigning argumentative papers, and we would like to see this trend to continue, particularly in the University Seminars.

Our major classroom recommendations are that SAGES seminar instructors emphasize the need for more intensive research and encourage students to chart their own paths through critical conversations with existing scholarship. We also suggest that instructors spend more time teaching students how to craft appropriate thesis statements.

Other recommendations for portfolio guidelines and future evaluation committees follow at the end of this report.

BACKGROUND

Previous faculty evaluation procedures during the SAGES pilot and first years of implementation (2002-2008) focused solely on assessing individual portfolios in order to provide feedback to students submitting them as a graduation requirement. In June 2009, a new system of evaluating portfolios was instituted with the objective of providing programmatic feedback on student writing to SAGES and English Department Writing Program administrators. The first university faculty evaluation committee read and evaluated 425 student portfolios over a two-week period determining that, while the majority of students were writing at expectation, there was a clear need for further instruction in academic argumentation. The 2010 committee assessed 700 portfolios and determined that students continued to demonstrate significant weaknesses in their argumentative abilities, specifically in writing strong thesis statements. The major recommendations of the 2010 committee included suggesting that the Writing Program craft and communicate to students and SAGES instructors a clearer definition of "argument," and that it modify the recommended writing outcomes for SAGES First Seminars to identify thesis writing as a fundamental component of written argumentation.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Committee members followed a schedule drafted by coordinators (Appendix 1). The first two days were spent discussing writing practices across disciplines, and familiarizing readers with past years' evaluation methods and grading criteria for the purposes of developing and testing a rubric for evaluation. As part of this process, we discussed the 2009 and 2010 reports, SAGES writing outcomes (Appendix 2), and readers' experiences and expectations. The rubric was created, tested, and revised. Readers then had eight days to read portfolios (an average of 82 per reader) and enter data into the Filer survey created for this year's portfolio rubric. We reconvened to discuss portfolios and write the report.

Rubric Generation

Our rubric allowed for evaluation of each essay included in the portfolio as well as for a holistic reading of the portfolio (Appendix 3). The committee made changes from the 2009 and 2010

rubrics, but was interested in maintaining continuity with the 2010 rubric. While maintaining a focus on the researched essay, readers added a set of questions addressing the USEM essay since previous rubrics did not do so. Readers agreed to choose a stated writing outcome to consider for the FSEM essay and the USEM essay. After the initial testing of the rubric, readers agreed to expand the “Above, Below and At Expectation” categories to “Clearly Exceeds, Exceeds, At, Below, and Greatly Below Expectation.” The committee recommends maintaining the five categories as a measure of greater precision in ranking.

Calibration

On the second day, a rubric was agreed upon for testing. Three sample portfolios were chosen randomly and copies were made for each reader. Readers used the test rubric individually to evaluate the portfolios. We then reconvened to discuss our specific responses to each of the rubric prompts. The rubric was revised based on readers’ suggestions.

RESULTS

Reflective Essay

Explanation

Consistent with the previous committee, we assessed the reflective essay according to three criteria: whether the student uses specific examples of strengths and weaknesses; whether the portfolio essays serve as a sustained topic of discussion; and whether the essays demonstrate a reflection on writing. We likewise continued the procedure of noting whether students reported growth in their writing (see Table 1).

The committee decided to assess each of these criteria quantitatively rather than qualitatively, viz. if a student used specific examples from the paper twice or more, then the reader was to mark “yes.” The same was the case if the student reflected on specific aspects of her or his writing regardless of whether the reader thought the student’s reflection was at the appropriate functional level, i.e., whether students focus on lower-order issues of mechanics when attention to higher-order concerns of argument, coherence, evidence, persuasion, and style would likely yield better long-term results.

The committee makes the following general observations prior to our specific conclusions:

- The quality of the reflective essay was often not a good indicator of the quality of writing in the portfolio.
- The reflective essay was often either the best or the worst essay in each portfolio.
- For many readers, this essay appeared as the most “canned” of all the essays, in part because it is the only essay written specifically to fulfill the requirements of the portfolio.

- Graduating seniors submitted 78.5% of the reflective essays, which presents challenges for any committee charged with assessing student writing at mid-college career (see Appendix 4).

Table 1. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Student Perception of Growth

Student reports growth	822 (91%)
Student reports no growth	50 (6%)
Student does not address growth	23 (3%)
<i>Not scored</i> ¹	<i>11 (1%)</i>

Table 2. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Reflective Essay

Criteria	Yes	Yes, Weak	No	<i>Not scored</i>
Does the student include specific examples of strengths and/or weaknesses in writing?	674 (74%)	177 (20%)	49 (5%)	6 (1%)
Are the portfolio's essays a topic of sustained discussion and evidence?	704 (78%)	158 (17%)	37 (4%)	7 (1%)
Does the essay demonstrate reflection about writing?	656 (72%)	208 (23%)	31 (3%)	11 (1%)

Conclusions

From a quantitative perspective, in each area of assessment, more than 90% of the students satisfied the requirements of the assignment (see Table 2).

From a qualitative standpoint, the committee determined the following:

Students use the reflective essay to introduce and summarize their portfolio essays rather than reflect on the writing process.

¹ The term “not scored” indicates that no answer was recorded on the Filer survey.

Recounting of the SAGES experience occasionally dominates the reflective essay, yet the committee notes that most of the students found it necessary to reflect on SAGES coursework as a way of contextualizing their writing. Although not universally the case, the reflective essays by graduating seniors tend to be more sophisticated and compelling than those by underclassmen.

The committee was somewhat concerned by the number (not a majority, but certainly enough to merit scrutiny) of reflections that latch onto mechanical rules as “curatives” for writing “ailments.” For instance, many students remark that they are stronger writers because they have expunged the use of the “passive voice” from their writing, as if passive voice itself is a bad thing, rather than a rhetorical option proper to specific situations. What is more, the committee sometimes found that students misidentify these local rhetorical choices as passive voice when they are something else entirely (e.g., cleft sentences, relative clauses, etc.). Our overarching concern is not with the specific rule but with the general belief that “fixing” a specific error is tantamount to becoming a competent writer.

It is evident that the students demonstrate a reflective understanding of basic rhetorical concepts, such as argument, thesis statement, emotional appeals, and so on, but it is equally clear that they have yet to translate that understanding into practice.

This previous observation might help explain our final conclusion, namely that 91% of the students identify growth, compared to 81% of the portfolios evidencing either some or clear improvement according to the readers’ assessments (see Tables 10 and 11). This 10% disparity will be addressed substantively below, but a few generalizations are directly relevant to the reflective essay. First, the committee believes that a “narrative of progress” defines a significant aspect of the reflective essay genre. While it may be a cynical posture adopted by some students, we concluded that the students do genuinely see themselves as improving, in part because they are engaged in the sociological activity of “presenting themselves” and part of the presentation of the self must acknowledge progress and growth. Second, the readers had a difficult time judging growth. For some readers, certain portfolios were strong throughout, reflecting the student’s best work, and therefore the reader could not identify a clear sense of progress, and thus marked the “not obvious” category. Other readers assumed that consistently strong essays must *ipso facto* demonstrate growth and thus marked the “some improvement” category. If the student is choosing her or his best work, it may be harder for readers to determine progress across the essays.

First Seminar Essay

Explanation

The committee evaluated First Seminar essays with three primary aims. First, as in the 2010 evaluation session, the committee was interested in whether these essays presented an argument, but defined “argument” more broadly as “an intent to persuade, regardless of source material

used” (cf. “researched argument” in the 2010 rubric). This broader definition probably accounts for the higher percentage of First Seminar papers classified as “argument” in the 2011 evaluation session. Second, in keeping with the English Department’s writing outcomes for SAGES First Seminars, the committee sought to determine whether these papers demonstrated a “clear and consistent voice” at this early stage. Third, the committee compared these papers with the rest of the portfolio for evidence of growth and development over the course of SAGES.

Table 3. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: First Seminar Essay Genre

Argument	572 (63%)
Other	327 (36%)
<i>Not scored</i>	7 (1%)

Table 4. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: First Seminar Essay Writing Outcome

Outcome	Yes	Yes, Weak	No	<i>Not scored</i>
Student writes in a clear and consistent voice. ²	680 (75%)	193 (21%)	27 (3%)	6 (1%)

Conclusions

First, the committee noted that, although 63% of the First Seminar papers present an argument, broadly defined, many students (36%) include “other” kinds of papers (e.g., autobiographical, biographical, descriptive, or creative). Such alternatives are perfectly acceptable according to the portfolio guidelines, and often gave committee members a broader basis for evaluating a student’s range of writing abilities. At the same time, some of these papers are too short (two pages or less) to provide an adequate basis for evaluation.

Second, the committee is encouraged to find that 75% of First Seminar papers demonstrate a “clear and consistent voice,” while another 21% do so at least weakly. Only 3% of the papers do not demonstrate a clear and consistent voice at all. The committee concludes that this writing outcome is largely being met in the First Seminar course.

²The Committee agreed to alter the wording of the stated outcome for the purposes of assessment. Currently, the outcome reads: “Student writes in a clear, consistent, and grammatical personal voice.”

Third, comparisons of First Seminar essays with the rest of the portfolio (written later) often provided considerable evidence of improvement in writing over the course of SAGES (81% of the portfolios demonstrate “clear evidence” or “some evidence” of “growth across the essays”; see Table 10).

University Seminar Essay

Explanation

This is the first year that the committee reviewed the USEM Essay. Our goals were to determine if the USEM essay contained an argument and to what extent the essay exhibited important characteristics of academic writing as per one of the stated English department writing outcomes: “Student demonstrates a facility with the sentence structures and rhetorical moves most common to academic writing.”

Table 5. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: University Seminar Essay Genre

Argument	619 (68%)
Other	279 (31%)
<i>Not scored</i>	8 (1%)

Table 6. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: University Seminar Essay Writing Outcome

Outcome	Yes	Yes, Weak	No	<i>Not scored</i>
Student demonstrates a facility with the sentence structures and rhetorical moves most common to academic writing.	529 (58%)	240 (26%)	67 (7%)	9 (1%)

Conclusions

As with the USEM essay, the committee used the broad definition of “argument” as “an intent to persuade, regardless of source material used.” Using this definition, we found that a high percentage (68%) of USEM essays are classified as argument. It is important to note that students were not required to submit an argument essay as part of their SAGES portfolio. Consequently, we believe that these results indicate that SAGES is stressing argument in its instruction and that students are perhaps scaffolding writing assignments in order to prepare for

the Research Paper. The committee found that 84% of the USEM Essays met the writing outcome (see Table 6).

Research Paper

Explanation

The committee agreed to define the categories below as follows: “Academic Argument” is a sourced research essay making the effort to persuade, however successful—and with or without the presence of a (strong) thesis statement. “Non-argumentative reports” have sources, but are more descriptive in nature. Examples might include a book report or an essay recounting the history of a person, place, or event. The category “other” includes case studies, literature reviews, or other course-specific projects that do not require students to make and support a claim.

Table 7. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Research Essay Genre

Academic argument	688 (76%)
Non-argumentative Report	144 (16%)
Other	39 (4%)
<i>Not scored</i>	35 (4%) ³

Table 8. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Research Essay

Criterion	Yes	Yes, Weak	No	<i>Not scored</i>	Not Applicable
Is there a thesis statement?	480 (53%)	242 (27%)	63 (7%)	6 (1%)	115 (13%)
Does the student effectively use evidence and examples?	671 (74%)	205 (23%)	26 (3%)	4 (0%)	
Does the student attribute referenced material?	643 (71%)	230 (25%)	30 (3%)	3 (0%)	

³Because “Other” was pre-selected as the default choice, if the reader did not complete the designation box, the survey computed the responses as “not scored.”

Conclusions

The committee reported a considerable increase over last year's figures (from 60% to 76%) in the number of research papers that contained an academic argument. Despite the greater incidence of argument-based research papers, many students display weakness in formulating a thesis statement. The committee found that students' thesis statements were difficult to discern and that they often made timid, equivocal claims. At the same time, supporting arguments were found to be generally strong and well crafted. SAGES seems to be providing effective instruction in using evidence and support, but it must continue to insist on the importance of formulating strong thesis statements. The citation of source material was another point of concern: at least one-quarter of research papers submitted showed inconsistent use of citation practices, particularly within a given paper. Readers also qualified a large number of research papers as "non-argumentative reports" and "other."

Holistic Evaluation

Explanation

The committee evaluated the overall portfolio quality in regard to defined elements that underlie effective writing. Building on four stated elements from the 2010 rubric, the committee added a fifth criterion, Critical Thinking/Sophistication of Thought. The agreed-upon definitions of the criteria are as follows:

Coherent Structure: the purpose or principles of the writing are obvious, easy to follow, and are presented in such a way that makes clear sense to the reader

Persuasive Abilities: demonstrates ability to convince readers of a position by the use of appropriate evidence, rhetorical appeals, appropriate structure and/or presentation, appropriate evidence, and critical analysis

Mechanics: includes grammar, spelling, and usage

Style: includes language, sentence structure, and rhetoric appropriate to a general academic discourse community

Critical Thinking/Sophistication of Thought: demonstrates general ability to synthesize preexisting arguments and ideas and to create and defend compelling claims

The committee also evaluated the overall effectiveness of the portfolio. Readers expanded the "Above, Below and At Expectation" categories from previous years' rubrics to "Clearly Exceeds, Exceeds, At, Below, and Greatly Below Expectation."

Table 9. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Holistic Evaluation

Criterion	Clearly Exceeds Expectation	Exceeds Expectation	At Expectation	Below Expectation	Greatly Below Expectation	<i>Not scored</i>
Coherent structure (organization, purpose, transitions)	73 (8%)	247 (28%)	448 (49%)	121 (13%)	12 (1%)	5 (1%)
Persuasive abilities (audience, evidence)	60 (7%)	223 (25%)	434 (48%)	170 (19%)	18 (2%)	1 (0%)
Style (tone, voice, word choice)	79 (9%)	255 (28%)	387 (42%)	162 (18%)	20 (2%)	3 (0%)
Mechanics (punctuation, syntax)	80 (9%)	199 (22%)	455 (50%)	140 (15%)	26 (3%)	6 (1%)
Critical thinking /sophistication of thought	79 (9%)	221 (24%)	413 (46%)	173 (19%)	16 (2%)	4 (0%)
OVERALL RANKING	70 (8%)	208 (23%)	472 (52%)	135 (15%)	15 (2%)	6 (0%)

Conclusions

In its holistic evaluations, the committee concluded that 81% of portfolios met its overall expectations (see Table 9). We found that 85% of the portfolios met or exceeded expectation with respect to coherent structure. Approximately 80% of the portfolios met or surpassed expectation for the following criteria: persuasive abilities, style, mechanics, and critical thinking (see Table 9).

Coherent Structure. In 85% of the portfolios the writing assignments indicated coherent structures that met or surpassed expectation. The writing assignments of the remaining 14% of the portfolios were not well organized, their purposes were difficult to identify, and transitions between sentences were hard to follow.

Persuasive Abilities. A slightly smaller proportion of writing portfolios indicates authors' abilities to write persuasively. The committee found that about 79% of the portfolios met or surpassed expectation for this criterion.

Style. In 79% of the portfolios, the writing style met or exceeded expectation. Approximately 21% of the portfolios were below expectation with respect to tone, voice, and word choice.

Mechanics. In 81% of the portfolios, the writing mechanics met or surpassed expectation. Approximately 19% of the portfolios failed to meet expectation with respect to consistent punctuation and syntax.

Critical thinking. Approximately 79% of the portfolios indicated that critical thinking was at or exceeded expectation. About 21% of the writing portfolios did not demonstrate sophistication of thought.

Overall Ranking. The committee found that 81% of the portfolios met or exceeded expectation.

Correlations between Ratings for Holistic Evaluation:

In discussing the holistic evaluations, members of the committee reported a wide variability of scoring patterns, motivating an examination of the extent to which scores in various holistic criteria correlate. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the strength of correlation between each pair of holistic criteria. Even though there is variability in the ratings from portfolio to portfolio, we find that the performance in any one holistic criterion is a good predictor of performance in any other criterion. For example, a portfolio that is rated "Above Expectation" in "Mechanics" is also very likely to be rated "Above Expectation" in "Critical Thinking."

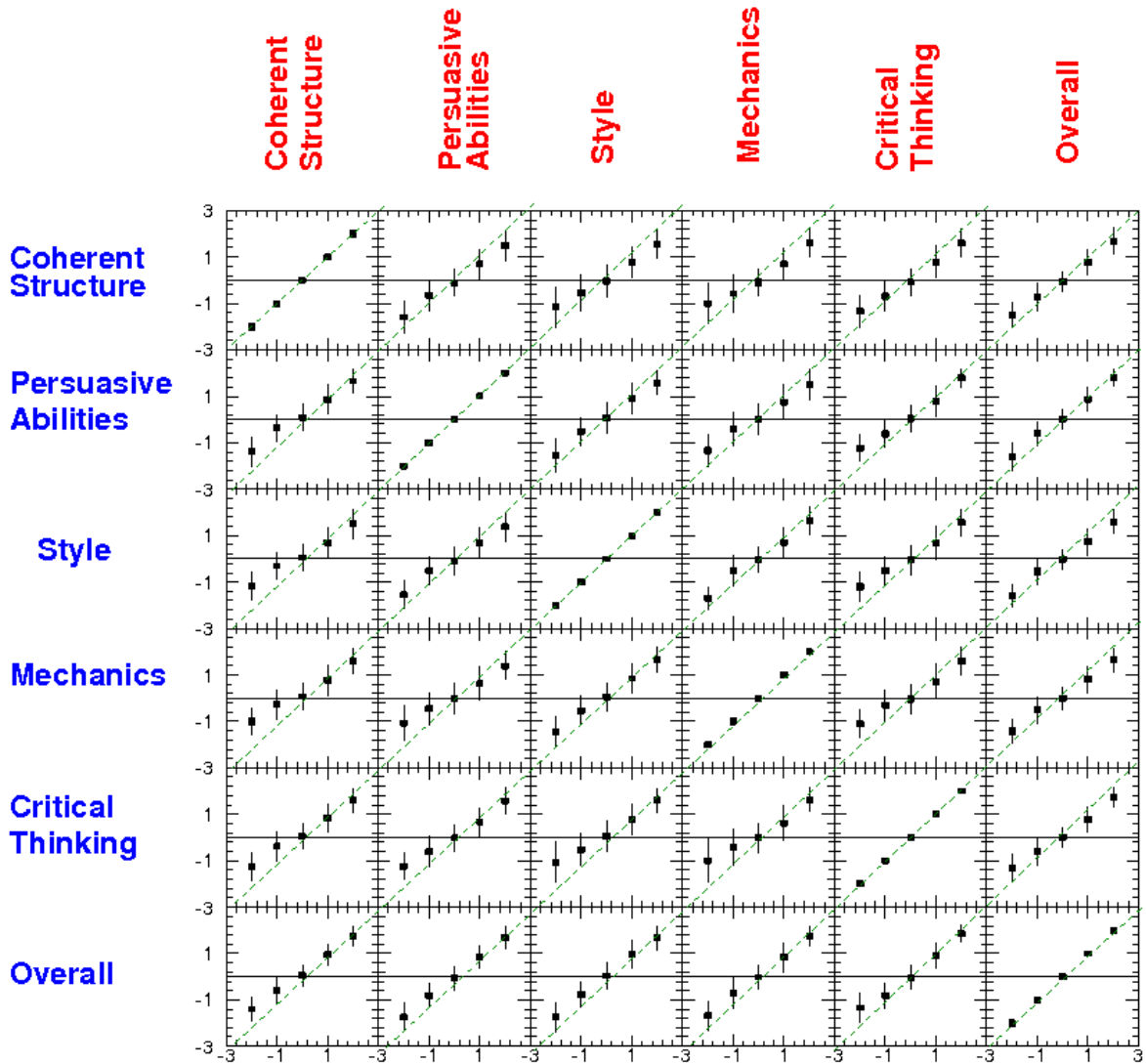


Figure 1: Graph showing correlation between any pair of the six holistic performance criteria. Although there are small variations from sub-plot to sub-plot, the trend with a correlation slope near unity demonstrates that the performance in any one holistic criterion is a good predictor of performance in any other criterion. For details, see Appendix 5.

Evaluation of Student Growth in Writing

Explanation

One new assessment that was added to the rubric this year was the following: “Based on the criteria above, there is evidence in the portfolio of growth across the essays, including the reflective essay.” The three options were: (1) Clear evidence, (2) Some evidence, or (3) Not obvious (see Table 10).

The motivation for these designations was to determine if readers could infer whether students’ writing skills have improved across the portfolio. Reporting such growth corresponds to an independent probe of improvement in student writing for students in the SAGES program. Here "growth" is interpreted as general improvement over the criteria associated with the holistic evaluation. For example, if student writing in the reflective essay and the research report is clearly stronger than the work presented in the first seminar essay, then this could correspond to "clear evidence" of student growth.

Table 10. Results of Portfolio Evaluation: Reader Perception of Student Growth

	Clear Evidence	Some Evidence	Not Obvious	<i>Not scored</i>
Based on the criteria above, there is evidence in the portfolio of growth across the essays, including the reflective essay.	362 (40%)	370 (41%)	151 (17%)	23 (3%)

Conclusions

Collectively, the readers reported at least some evidence of growth for 81% of the portfolios, including clear evidence of growth in 41% of the portfolios. For 17% of the portfolios, the readers could not find evidence of growth.

We note that the ability of any reader to infer growth in a portfolio is somewhat confounded by the variability in the way that students assemble their portfolios. For instance, students may select their best work from each semester which might not necessarily show growth; therefore some readers may have chosen “Not Obvious.” Growth is also difficult to measure for students who present non-standard portfolios with papers from non-SAGES courses. We also assume a large level of variability in terms of the time and effort that students put into the reflective essay in relation to the regularly graded papers included elsewhere in the portfolio. Nonetheless,

despite these complications, the readers felt that at least some evidence of growth can be ascertained in the vast majority of portfolios.

We also note that identifying growth in student writing skills does not automatically mean that the SAGES program can claim full credit for this growth. However, the committee agreed that the SAGES curriculum which requires students to take writing intensive courses over several semesters is likely to strengthen and improve student writing as a whole.

One other interesting aspect of growth in student writing is the comparison between student self-reporting and reader assessment. Although the vast majority of students self-reported growth in their writing, a small subset of students either reported no growth or did not address the issue of growth in their reflective essays. Table 11 shows the correlation between student reports of growth and growth reported by the portfolio reader. The correlation shows that when a student reports no growth or does not report growth, the portfolio reader tended to choose either some or not obvious evidence of growth. We note that in fact, the tendency of the student to self-report growth in the reflective essay may be biasing the readers' ability to detect evidence of growth in the portfolio papers.

Student Reflection	Review Assessment	Num	Percent
Reports Growth	Clear Evidence of Growth	347	43%
	Some Evidence of Growth	331	41%
	Not Obvious	125	16%
Reports No Growth	Clear Evidence of Growth	8	16%
	Some Evidence of Growth	24	48%
	Not Obvious	17	34%
Does Not Address Growth	Clear Evidence of Growth	4	11%
	Some Evidence of Growth	11	29%
	Not Obvious	23	60%

Table 11: *Tabulated results for reported growth in student writing.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Classroom Instruction

Minimum Length Requirement for Course Essays. The committee recommends that instructors remind students that the course papers that they submit in the portfolio should be at least three pages long. Although it was the exception rather than the rule, members came across papers that were two, or even one, pages long. This made evaluating a student's entire portfolio and charting his or her progress difficult.

Thesis Writing. While we were pleased to see an increase in the number of argumentative papers compared to previous years, the committee noticed that many of these papers did not have strong, clear thesis statements. We recommend that instructors pay increased attention to helping students write effective thesis statements.

Recommendations for Portfolio Guidelines

Solicit Unrevised Essays. Even as students choose their "best" essays from each course, the committee expects to see gradual, if not subtle, development in academic writing. Therefore, we suggest that the guidelines include explicit instructions for students to leave the essays untouched so as to showcase their progress. While it seems that most students do not revise their essays, there were several who mentioned that they did, making it difficult for readers to determine progress. One extreme case was a student who "spent nine hours" revising one of her essays. To be clear, however, students *can* (and probably should) submit essays that were revised during the course.

Note: For some students, this request is counter-intuitive, especially since they often look back in disbelief at the quality of their earlier essays. It might be helpful, then, if a brief explanation of our thinking in terms of program assessment is included in the guidelines.

Continue to Refine Reflective Essay Prompt. We understand that the reflective essay prompt was significantly revised last year, but we suggest fine-tuning it to emphasize that SAGES wants students to reflect on their "growth" as writers. Right now, the guidelines repeatedly mention "strengths and weaknesses"—language that lends itself to listing and description, not necessarily in-depth reflection. Students should feel free to contextualize their essays, but perhaps we should encourage them to limit extensive summaries (of courses and essays) so that the contextualization aids reflection instead of altogether replacing it.

As in previous years, committee members suggested posting online a range of essays that demonstrate different kinds of quality reflection; however, there is a danger that some students

would simply imitate those examples rather than independently reflect, so perhaps only excerpts of essays should be posted.

Clarify Research Essay Description. In light of the fact that 16% of students submitted non-argumentative reports, we suggest removing a few words that several committee members considered misleading, or at least confusing. Instead of asking students to submit researched essays that “include their own novel *claim or argument*,” we recommend asking students simply to submit essays that “include their own argument.”

Timing of Submissions. As mentioned, the majority of portfolios (78.5%) were submitted by students who graduated in May 2011 or earlier (see Appendix 4), which poses problems for a program that is committed to a mid-college career assessment as well as one that seeks to both award outstanding writers and help unsatisfactory writers get further writing instruction. (Most, if not all, of our “top” and “bottom” portfolios belong to students who have already graduated and left the university.) We echo the recommendations made by previous committees: we encourage students to submit their portfolios soon after they complete their last University Seminar; if anything, it leaves less time for students to lose papers, a fact that could change should an electronic storage system be implemented.

Streamline Assembly Process. Given the recurring issues with students meeting deadlines, combined with the issue of students losing papers, we recommend that SAGES do whatever it can to expedite the submission process (e.g. set up an electronic storage system on Filer, provide an incentive for timely submissions and/or create a penalty for late submissions).

Recommendations for Future Evaluation Procedures

Reading Load. We recommend that readers evaluate no more than an average of eight portfolios a day. We suggest that members either receive more reading time or that more readers are selected. The committee notes that more time and resources will be necessary to continue this process in its present format as submissions increase.

Continue with Calibration. In general, we were pleased with the calibration process that we used. The committee read and discussed three portfolios prior to our individual readings and was pleased with the results and the uniformity of our evaluative standards.

Continue Use of Expanded Categories. We expanded the categories in the holistic evaluation from three to five (Greatly Exceeds Expectation, Exceeds Expectation, At Expectation, Below Expectation, and Greatly Below Expectation) and there was consensus that the expansion was a helpful evaluative tool, as it introduced more nuance into our deliberations. We recommend that future committees retain these five categories in future evaluation sessions.

Standardizing Rubric. This committee made only minor adjustments to the rubric used in 2009 and 2010. We recommend standardizing the rubric in order to bring uniformity to the evaluation process as future committees chart progress over the years.

Better Online Survey Tool. At present, Filer does not alert the user if he or she has unwittingly left an item blank. And, while Filer is adequate for gathering information, it does not disaggregate it professionally. We ask that SAGES consider using a better online survey tool.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1. 2011 SAGES Portfolio Committee Schedule

General Daily Schedule

We will proceed through the evaluation process as follows:

1. Preparation for Reading
2. Rubric Making
3. Reading & Evaluating
4. Report Writing

M June 6, 9:00-4:00: Orientation & Workshop on Portfolios
(Preparation)

T June 7, 9:00-4:00: Workshop on Portfolios; Sample Student Portfolios
Distributed for Reading
(Preparation & Rubric Making)

W June 8, 9:00-4:00: Reader Calibration
(Rubric Making)

TH June 9 - W June 15: Off-Campus Portfolio Reading
(Reading & Evaluating)

TH June 16, 9:00-4:00: Reporting on Reading
(Reading & Evaluating)

F June 17, 9:00-4:00: Reporting on Reading & Drafting of Final Report
(Report Writing)

M June 20, 9:00-4:00: Creation of Final Summary Report
(Report Writing)

T June 21, 9:00-4:00: Final Summary Report Completed

Appendix 2. English Department Recommended Writing Outcomes for SAGES Seminars

By the end of First Seminar, students should be able to:

- Engage critically and considerately with the written ideas of peers;
- Identify and summarize the main points of a published piece of writing supplied by the instructor;
- Respond critically in writing to scholarly ideas from a variety of perspectives or positions;
- Craft a specifically expressed question or thesis statement that can form the basis for sustained inquiry on a topic
- Become familiar with common forms of academic argumentation, including the strategies writers use to persuade different audiences.
- Identify representative University and University Circle resources to support writing projects;
- Write in a consistent, clear, and grammatical personal voice;
- Reflect critically on their own ideas;
- Describe Case's Academic Integrity Policy;
- Explain the role of and significance of differences among various citation formats (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.); and,
- Refine phrasing and ideas through directed revision.

By the end of a University Seminar, students should be able to:

- Identify, summarize, and respond critically to an array of scholarly ideas and texts gathered through independent research.
- Develop a focused, informed, and specific research question (appropriate to the topic of the course and to the context of a scholarly problem).
- Define a scholarly position in a clear, grammatical voice that is characteristic of an academic community.
- Draft persuasive and/or analytical arguments of appropriately delimited scope for a 10-12 page paper. These arguments should include strong and clear claims, appropriate presentation and interpretation of evidence, and substantial exploration of the warrants/backings that authorize them.
- Cite consistently and comprehensively a variety of print and electronic resources using a citation format appropriate to the area of inquiry.

- Demonstrate a facility with the sentence structures and rhetorical moves most common to academic writing.
- Demonstrate a capacity for self-directed revision of writing for effective argumentation and for stylistic clarity.

Appendix 3. 2011 Rubric

Student Name _____ Initials of Evaluator _____

Expected graduation date: _____

How would you classify this portfolio?

Standard Portfolio _____ Contains substitutions / variations _____

Does this portfolio contain a multi-authored paper? Y N

Reflective Essay

Student perception of growth in writing skills:

Student reports growth _____

Student reports no growth _____

Student does not address growth _____

Does student include specific examples of strengths and/or weaknesses in writing? Y Y/W N

Are the portfolio's essays a topic of sustained discussion and evidence? Y Y/W N

Does the essay demonstrate reflection about writing? Y Y/W N

First Seminar Essay

Argument _____ Other: _____

Student writes in a consistent and clear voice. Y Y/W N

USEM Essay

Argument _____ Other: _____

Student demonstrates a facility with the sentence structures and rhetorical moves most common to academic writing. Y Y/W N N/A

Research Essay

Academic argument _____ Non-argumentative Report _____ Other: _____

Is there a thesis statement? Y Y/W N N/A

Does the student effectively use evidence and examples? Y Y/W N

Does the student attribute referenced material? Y Y/W N

Holistic Evaluation

Element	Clearly exceeds	Exceeds expectation	At expectation	Below expectation	Greatly below
Coherent structure (organization, purpose, transitions)					
Persuasive Abilities (audience, evidence)					
Style (tone, voice, word choice)					
Mechanics (punctuation, syntax)					
Critical thinking/sophistication of thought					
Overall Ranking					

Based on the criteria above, there is evidence in the portfolio of growth across the essays, including the reflective essay.

Clear evidence _____ Some evidence _____ Not obvious _____

This portfolio deserves recognition _____

This portfolio indicates a need for further writing support _____

General comment (if necessary):

Appendix 4. Student Reported Graduation Dates:

Graduation Date	Num	Percent	Num	Percent	Impact
Jan 2010	1	0.1%	713	78.5%	Too Late
May 2010	3	0.3%			
Aug 2010	15	1.7%			
Jan 2011	92	10.1%			
May 2011	594	65.4 %			
Aug 2011	8	0.9%			
Jan 2012	15	1.7%	183	20.2%	Not Too Late
May 2012	123	13.5%			
Jan 2013	5	0.6%			
May 2013	37	4.1%			
May 2014	2	0.2%			
May 2015	1	0.1%			
blank	9	1.0%			

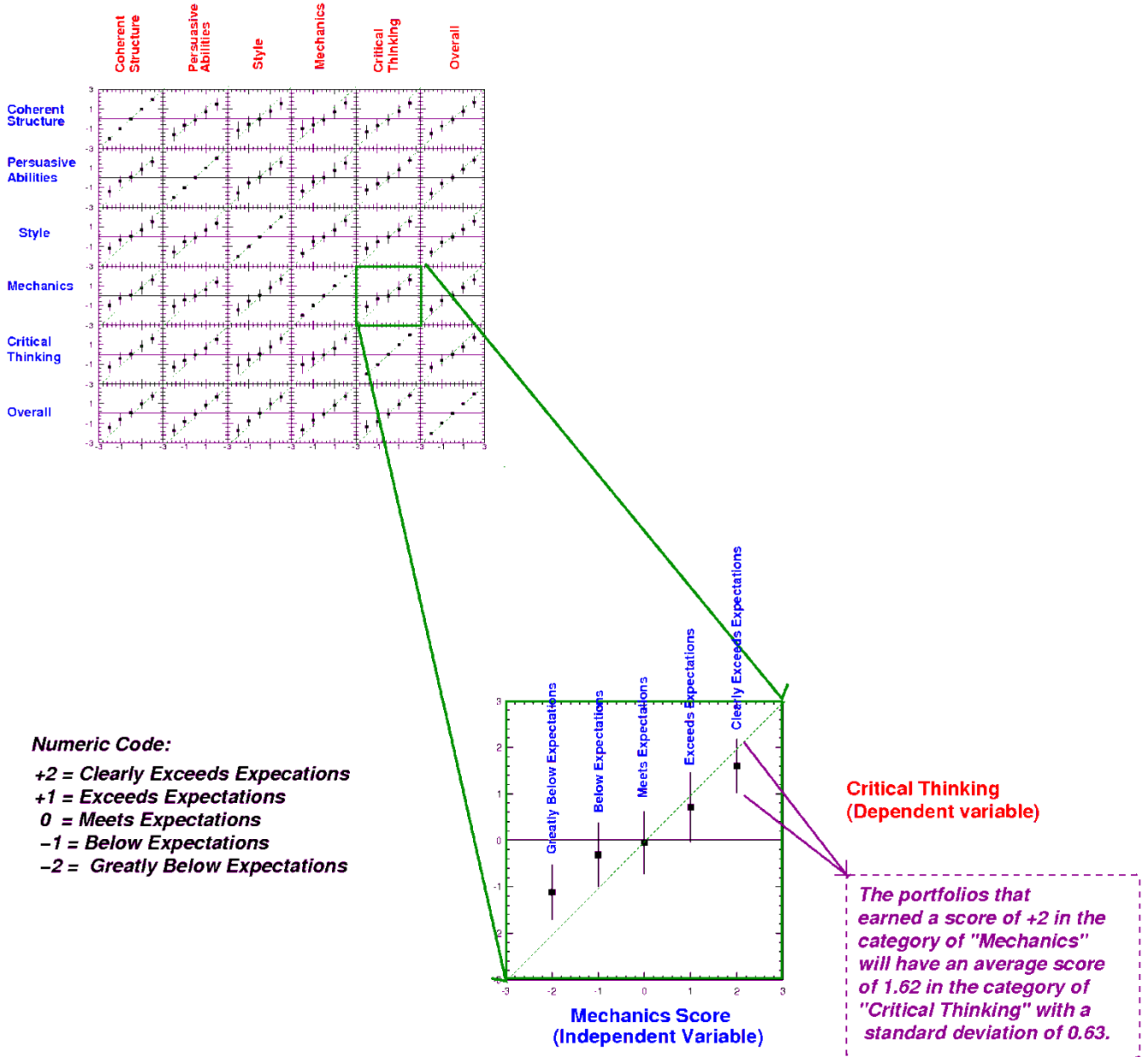
Appendix 4. Reported graduation date frequency in time-order. Portfolios submitted with graduation dates on or before August 2011 labeled “Too Late” correspond to portfolios submitted within one year of planned graduation.

Appendix 5. Detailed Explanation of Holistic Correlation Plot

Figure 1 provides detailed information on the correlation between all six holistic performance criteria in a compact form. The five holistic ratings are represented numerically by integers from -2 to +2. Thirty-six subplots represent all possible pairing of two criteria. Sub-plots are indexed by row and column with the row indicating the independent criterion and the column representing the independent variable. Additional explanatory details are provided in the expanded version of this Figure shown below.

Note that a perfect correlation corresponds to a linear function with a unity slope as indicated by the diagonal dashed line. Note that each data point corresponds to the mean value and the vertical bars correspond to plus-or-minus one standard deviation statistical fluctuations. Sub-plots located along the diagonal (row equals column) show the obvious fact that each criterion correlates perfectly with itself.

As an illustrative example, if we examine the selected subplot corresponding to the fourth row and the fifth column, the five data points here tell the mean and statistical spread of the values for "Critical Thinking" as a function of the reported value of "Mechanics."



Appendix 5. Detailed Explanation of Holistic Correlation Plot