Written Communication

Description and Learning Outcomes

The Composition program at George Mason University serves over 9,000 students a year on five campuses via five courses: English 100, English 121, English 122, English 101, and English 302. In all five courses, students are encouraged to see writing as a social, imaginative, inquiry-based recursive action. Writers create texts in a range of genres that attend to particular rhetorical and academic contexts and that meet the expectations of particular audiences.

ENGH 101 introduces students to the recursive, iterative nature of writing by developing reading, writing, and research strategies for a range of audiences, genres, and purposes.

In ENGH 100, a 4-hour credit course, multilingual students have the opportunity to enhance their English language proficiency while developing reading, writing, and research strategies for a range of rhetorical contexts. There are two versions of ENGH 100: one offered to direct admit students who self-select into the course and the other for international students in INTO Mason's accelerated pathway program.

ENGH 302, intended for students who have at least 60 completed credit hours, prepares students to do advanced rhetorical analysis, research, and writing oriented toward investigating, engaging with, and responding to meaningful disciplinary questions in a variety of contexts within and beyond the university walls.

In addition to these course offerings, the Composition program partners with INTO Mason to offer writing instruction to undergraduate and graduate international students participating in the Pathways program. The ENGH 121/122 courses offer a two-semester approach for undergraduate international students working on developing and refining academic writing skills based on current composition and rhetoric and linguistics scholarship. ENGH 121-122 and ENGH 100 offered through INTO Mason are co-taught between a Composition specialist from the English department and an EAP specialist from INTO Mason. The co-instructors collaborate on curriculum design, lesson planning, and student feedback.

Student Learning Outcomes

Written Communication – Lower Division Composition

ENGH 100/101/122, as a lower division of written communication, focus on writing in ways to help students communicate more fluently, express ideas more convincingly, and think more critically. Following are the learning outcomes for the lower division written communication[10].

---

[10] For more detail, please see https://composition.gmu.edu/first-year-composition

1. Students are able to analyze and respond to a range of rhetorical situations with increased awareness of the purposes, audiences, and contexts of writing. They are able to identify appropriate rhetorical strategies and apply them in their own writing.

2. Students develop strategies for anticipating and using audience response as they engage in and reflect upon a recursive writing process that includes exploration, inquiry, and invention, as well as drafting, organizing, revising, peer-reviewing, and editing.

3. Students gain emerging college-level proficiency in critically reading and writing nonfiction genres to develop analysis, reflection, exposition, argumentation, and research skills.

4. Students are able to use research strategies for topic exploration and refining research questions; locate, select, evaluate, synthesize, and document sources; and incorporate outside facts, perspectives, and ideas in their writing to complicate and extend their own ideas. They are able to employ appropriate technologies and resources to support their reading, thinking, researching, and writing.

5. Students develop knowledge of linguistic structures and writing conventions through critical reading and practice (writing and revision). They understand why writing conventions vary based on genre and audience and apply this knowledge by composing different types of texts.

Written Communication – Advanced Composition

ENGH 302, Advanced Composition, prepares students to do advanced level analysis and writing specifically within their major and possible future workplaces. Following are the overall learning outcomes for the upper division written communication[11].

1. Students will be able to analyze rhetorical situations–audience, purpose, and context– in order to recognize the expectations of readers and understand the main purposes of composing across multiple contexts relevant to their fields of study.

2. Students will understand the conventions of academic and non-academic genres, to include usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and attribution/citation systems.

3. Students will be able to apply critical reading strategies that are appropriate to advanced academic and non-academic texts of relevance to their fields of study.

4. Students will identify and synthesize multiple perspectives in articulating and refining a research question relevant to their fields of study.

5. Students will engage in a recursive process of inventing, investigating, shaping, drafting, revising, and editing to produce a range of academic and non-academic texts of relevance to their fields of study.

---

[11] https://composition.gmu.edu/advanced-composition/engh-302

In addition, ENGH 302 focuses on the following learning outcomes aligned with the OSCAR undergraduate research initiative:

- CORE: Articulate and refine a question, problem, or challenge
- ETHICAL: Identify relevant ethical issues and follow ethical principles
- DISCOVERY: Distinguish between personal beliefs and evidence
- METHOD: Gather and evaluate evidence appropriate to the inquiry
- METHOD: Appropriately analyze scholarly evidence
- CONTEXT: Explain how knowledge is situated and shared in relevant scholarly contexts

Approved Courses and Enrollment

All students are required to complete a first-year composition course (ENGH 100, 101, or 122) and an Advanced Composition course (ENGH 302), or equivalent competency (e.g. AP score or written waiver exam). Approximately 60% of students who take ENGH 302 are transfer students, most of whom have completed their lower-division Written Communication requirement at another institution.

Students in the Honors College take HNRS 110: Principles of Research and Inquiry or HNRS 302 (for transfer students) to fulfill their learning outcomes in this category. Although not formally a part of the Mason Core, HNRS 110 and 302 are also included in this assessment.

Lower-division English Composition courses enroll almost 3,000 students each year with an average class size of 15 for ENGH 100 and 18 for ENGH 101 (see Table 27). ENGH 302 enrolls an average of 6,300 students each year with an average class size of 20. HNRS 110 is taught in fall semester of each year, enrolling nearly 500 students each fall. Figure 82 shows enrollment trends over the past five years.

Courses Included in Assessment

This report covers assessment activities completed in AY 18 and AY19. Student work samples were collected from lower division English composition courses in Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, concluding with a review session in May 2019. The assessment period included 26 sections of ENGH 100, 137 sections of ENGH 101, and four sections of ENGH 122 courses. Work samples were collected from eleven Mason Korea campus sections. All sections offered in the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 167 course sections included in the assessment period, 83% submitted materials.

For assessment of advanced composition learning outcomes, student work samples were collected from ENGH 302 in fall 2017, ENGH 302 from Mason Korea in fall 2018, and from HNRS 110 and 302 in fall 2018. Sections were randomly selected to participate.

Enrollment and Grades Distribution

Lower Division Composition

A total of 2,863 students enrolled in ENGH 100, 101, and 122 courses in the assessment period. Of these students, 91% entered Mason as freshmen, 5.3% were transfer students, and 3.4% were INTO Mason students. Of the 2,863 total students, 82% passed their courses with a C or above (see Figure 69). ENGH 101 had the highest DFW rate, at 17% for AY19.

There were differences in final grades within and among the courses. ENGH 100 had the highest average grades (M = 3.06), ENGH 101 the second highest (M = 2.83), and ENGH 122 the lowest (M = 2.54); the differences were significant ($p<.05$). For all three courses, students identified as female performed significantly better than students identified as male. There were no differences by race or ethnicity in any of the three courses.

Figure 69. Grades Distribution for Mason Core Lower Division Composition Courses, AY2019
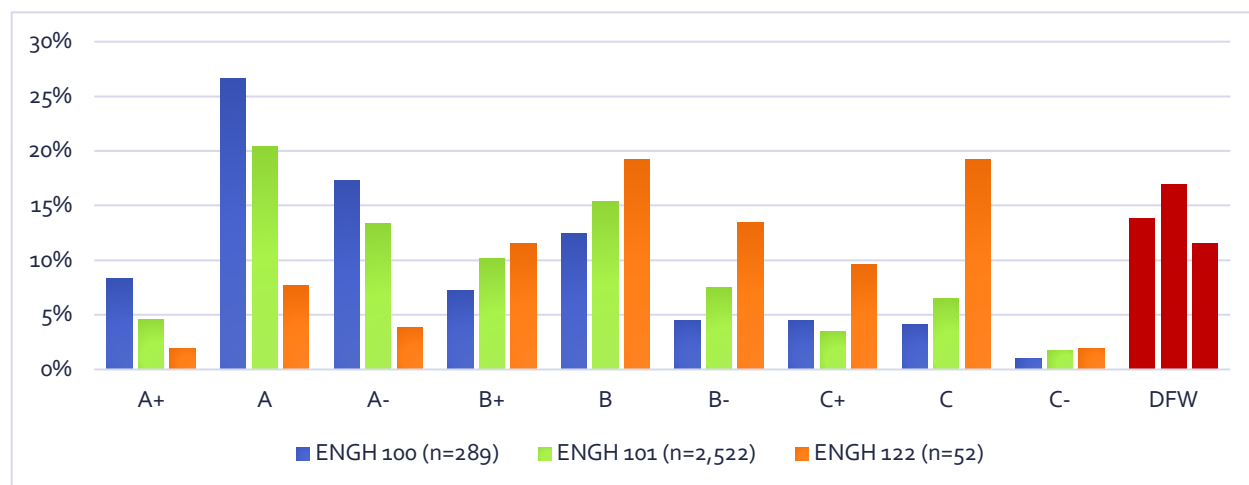

Advanced Composition

A total of 3,456 students enrolled in ENGH 302, HNRS 110/302 courses in the assessment period. Of these students, 47% entered Mason as freshmen and 53% were transfer students. Of the 3,456 total students, 88% passed their courses with a C or above (see Figure 70).

There are differences in final grades within and among the courses. For all three courses, students identified as female (M = 3.26, SD = 1.01) earned significantly better grades on average than students identified as male (M = 2.98, SD = 1.15). Students who entered Mason as freshmen (M = 3.11, SD = 1.12) had higher grades on average in ENGH 302 than students who entered as transfer students (M = 3.01, SD = 1.12). There were no differences by race or ethnicity in any of the three courses.

Figure 70. Grades Distribution for Mason Core Advanced Composition Courses, ENGH 302 fall 2017; HNRS 110, HNRS 302, ENGH 302K fall 2018
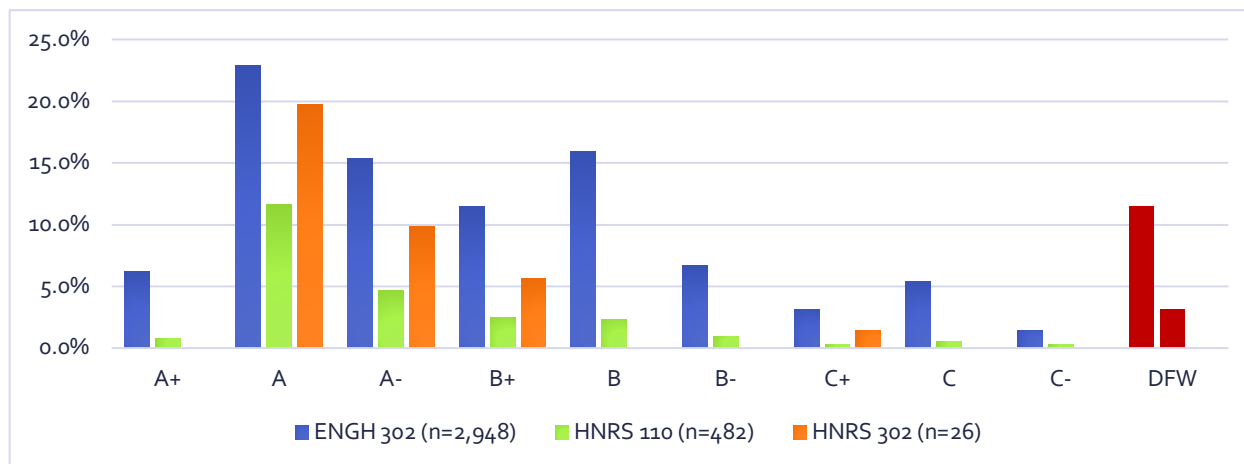
Assessment Methods and Results: Written Communication – Lower Division Composition

The assessment was led by the Composition Director and leadership team, in collaboration with the Mason Core assessment director. Student written work samples were requested from all course sections of ENGH 100 and 101 taught in the assessment period (fall 2018 and spring 2019). ENGH 122 is taught primarily in spring semesters, so samples were drawn in spring 2019. Faculty in ENGH 101 were asked to submit samples of an annotated bibliography and final researched essay students submitted at the end of semester. Faculty in ENGH 100 and ENGH 122 submitted a research plan that included a synthesis matrix to show the sources and connections among sources that students were making as well as academic research papers, which differed from the researched essays typically written in ENGH 101 for public audiences. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample.

The **ENGH 100/101/122 Student Samples Rubric** was used for this assessment. The rubric was developed by Mason Composition faculty as a tool to assess individual student work on six learning tasks or outcomes. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Novice, Emerging Proficiency, Proficient, and Advanced, as well as an option for "Not Applicable/No Evidence." The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student performance levels in a context of learning and growth. The rubric is intended to be used in these three courses only, and it is scaffolded to align with the **AAC&U Written Communication VALUE Rubric** (2009).

Faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. Reviewers met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers were faculty members who have taught Mason Core Composition courses. Reviewers earned a small stipend for their efforts. Each student work sample was assessed

twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 71-77 displays results from 432 randomly selected student work samples rated on the rubric. Figure 71 displays results by outcome for all samples. Figures 72-77 disaggregate the results by outcome and course. A rating of "no evidence" was used when the learning outcome could not be seen in the sample; this could mean that either the assignment did not require application of the outcome, or that the student did not demonstrate it. A "no evidence" rating provides important information in aggregate but is given no value for an individual sample.

Figure 71. Assessment Results, Aggregated, including "No Evidence" Ratings
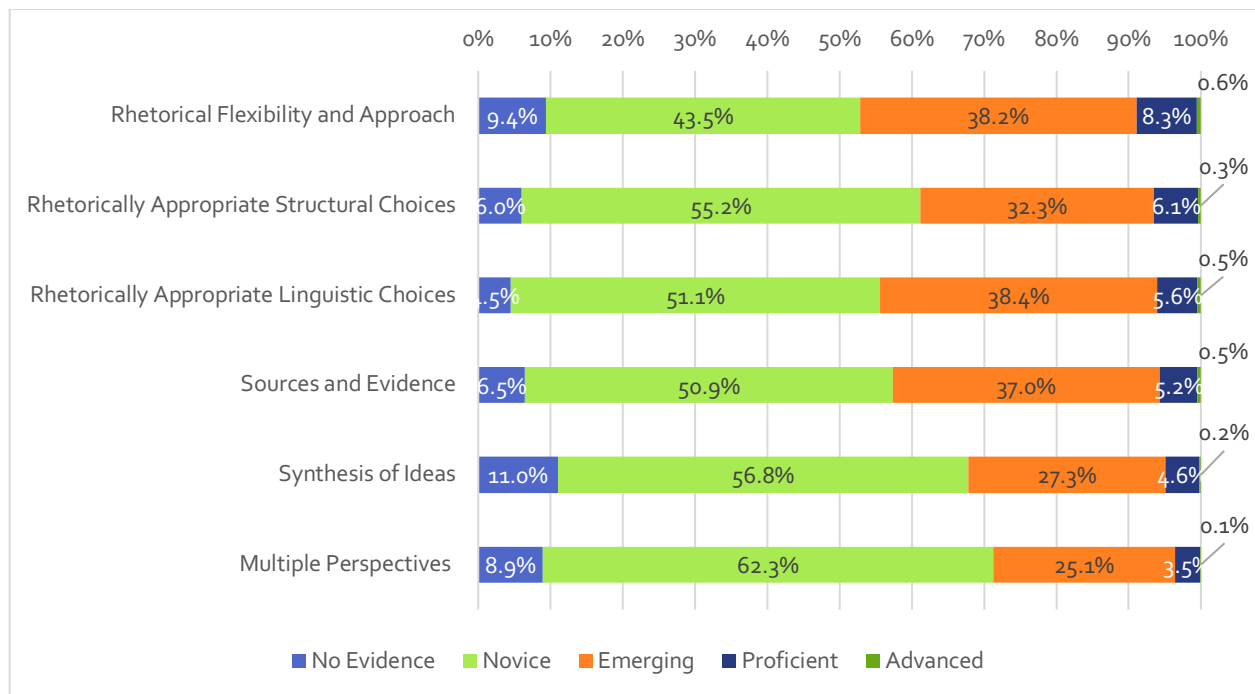
Assessment Results, Disaggregated by Outcome and Course

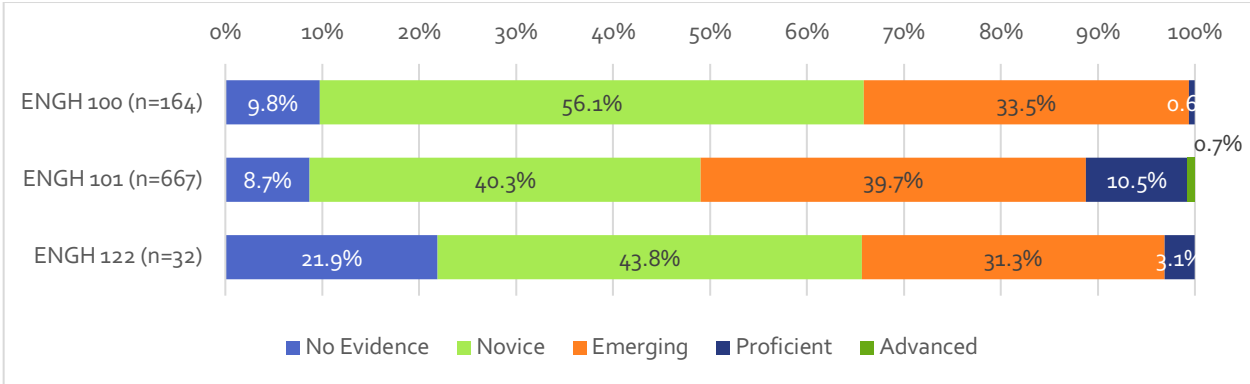*Figure 72. Rhetorical Flexibility and Approach*

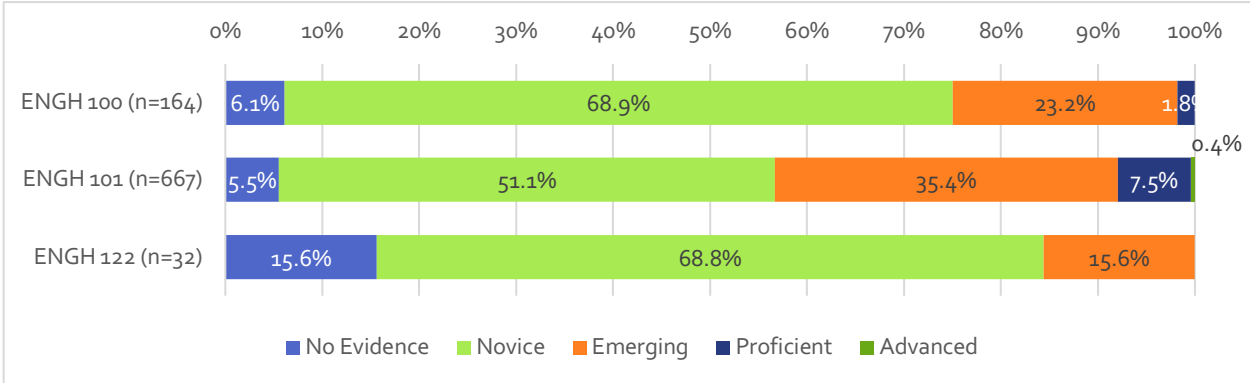*Figure 73. Rhetorically Appropriate Structural Choices*

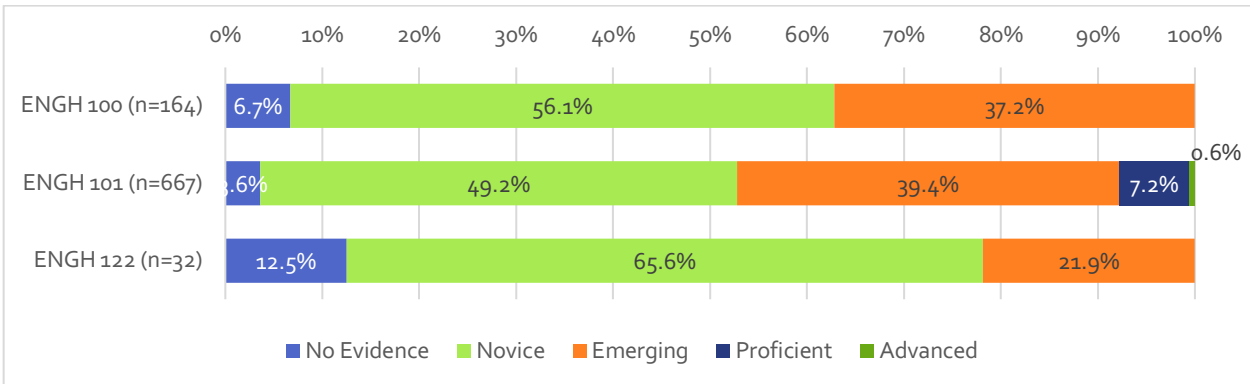*Figure 74. Rhetorically Appropriate Linguistic Choices*
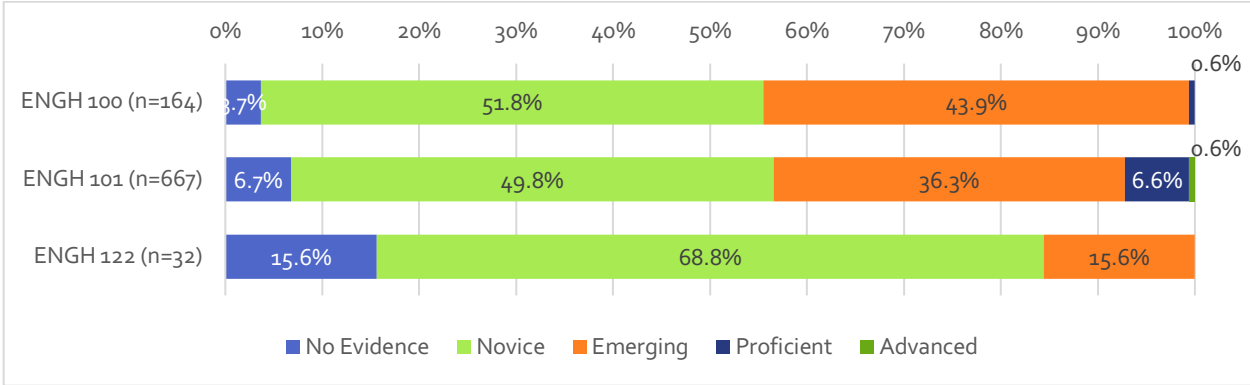
Figure 75. Sources and Evidence

Stacked bar chart showing percentages for:
- ENGH 100 (n=164): No Evidence 3.7%, Novice 51.8%, Emerging 43.9%, Advanced 0.6%
- ENGH 101 (n=667): No Evidence 6.7%, Novice 49.8%, Emerging 36.3%, Proficient 6.6%, Advanced 0.6%
- ENGH 122 (n=32): No Evidence 15.6%, Novice 68.8%, Emerging 15.6%

Legend: No Evidence, Novice, Emerging, Proficient, Advanced

Figure 76. Synthesis of Ideas

Stacked bar chart showing percentages for:
- ENGH 100 (n=164): No Evidence 9.8%, Novice 54.9%, Emerging 35.4%
- ENGH 101 (n=667): No Evidence 11.1%, Novice 56.7%, Emerging 25.9%, Proficient 6.0%, Advanced 0.3%
- ENGH 122 (n=32): No Evidence 15.6%, Novice 68.8%, Emerging 15.6%

Legend: No Evidence, Novice, Emerging, Proficient, Advanced

Figure 77. Multiple Perspectives

Stacked bar chart showing percentages for:
- ENGH 100 (n=164): No Evidence 4.9%, Novice 70.7%, Emerging 24.4%
- ENGH 101 (n=667): No Evidence 9.1%, Novice 60.4%, Emerging 25.8%, Proficient 4.5%, Advanced 0.1%
- ENGH 122 (n=32): No Evidence 25.0%, Novice 59.4%, Emerging 15.6%

Legend: No Evidence, Novice, Emerging, Proficient, Advanced
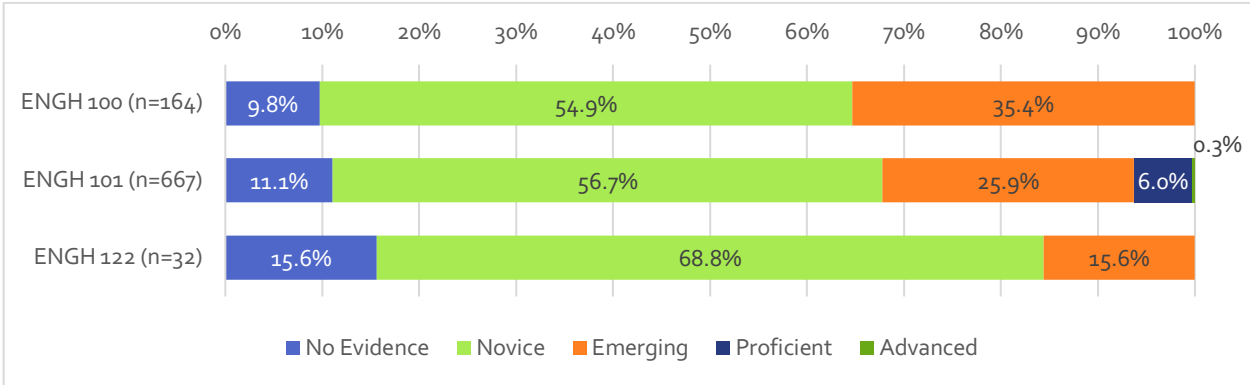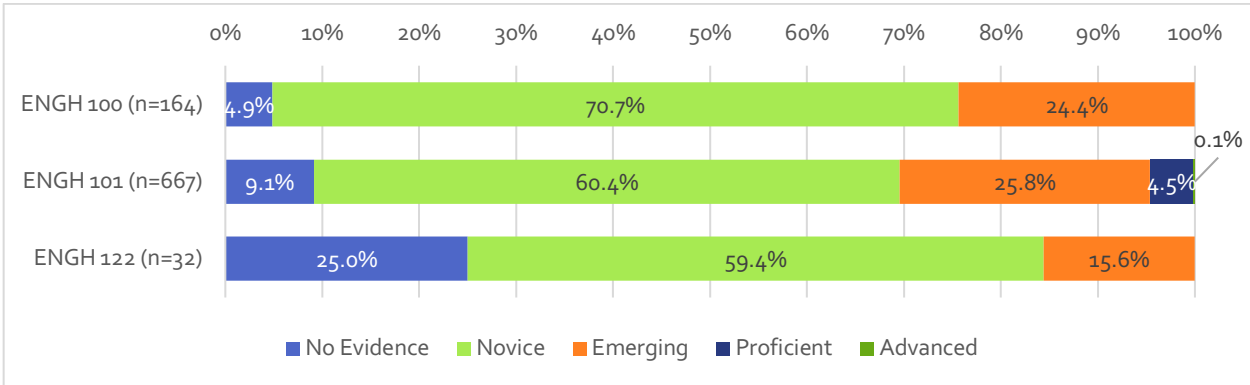
Highlights from Analysis of Results

Data were analyzed to ascertain differences in achieving the six learning outcomes. Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are

ordinal; Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U, (p <.05) was used when analyzing differences between two groups, and Independent-Samples Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to analyze differences across three or more groups or courses. Demographic groups included gender, race/ethnicity, and transfer status. "No evidence" was treated as missing. Significant findings (p <.05) are noted below.

- Overall, student samples were most likely to be rated as Novice (43.5 – 63.4%), with 25-38% rated as Emerging.

- Students in ENGH 101 were more likely to receive higher ratings on all outcomes.

- Mason Korea samples performed significantly better than Fairfax samples on two outcomes: **Rhetorical Flexibility and Approach** and **Synthesis of Ideas** (see Table 28).

- There were significant differences overall by gender on two outcomes: **Rhetorically Appropriate Linguistic Choices** and **Sources and Evidence**. On both outcomes, students identified as female earned higher scores than students identified as male.

  o For ENGH 101, there were differences by gender on one outcome only: **Rhetorically Appropriate Linguistic Choices**, for which students identified as female earned higher scores on average than students identified as male.

- There were no differences in any course by race or ethnicity.

Because ENGH 100 and 122 are designed for students who need additional language instruction, assessment results were compared between these courses. Differences were found on two outcomes: **Sources and Evidence** and **Synthesis of Ideas**. Students in ENGH 100 performed significantly higher on these two outcomes than students in ENGH 122.

Assessment Methods and Results: Written Communication – Upper Division Composition

Student written work samples were requested from a random selection of course sections taught in the assessment period. Faculty were asked to submit samples from the final drafts of the research paper (for all courses) due at the end of the semester. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample.

The **English 302 Revised Research Project Rubric, Adapted from the *Students as Scholars Master Rubric*** was used for this assessment. The rubric was developed by Mason Composition faculty as a tool to assess individual student work on three learning tasks or outcomes that scaffold to the inquiry outcomes for the *Students as Scholars* undergraduate research initiative. The rubric uses five performance descriptors: Novice, Emerging Proficiency, Approaching Proficiency, Proficient, and Exceptional. The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student performance levels in a context of learning and growth.
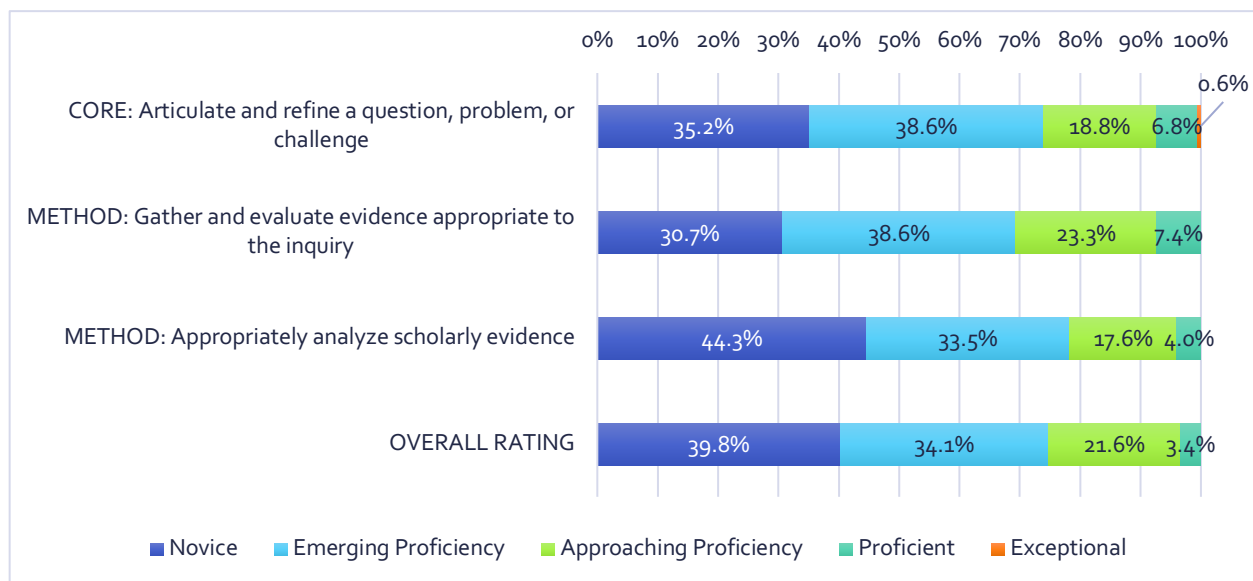
Faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. There were two review sessions: one for ENGH 302 and a second for HNRS 110 and 302. Reviewers for the first session met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers for the second session were recruited from the first, and were asked to complete the reviews on their own during a two-week period in August 2019. Reviewers were faculty members who have taught ENGH 302 or HNRS 110 courses. They earned a small stipend for their efforts.

Each student work sample was assessed twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 78 and 79 display results from 153 randomly selected student work samples rated on the rubric, for a total of 264 ratings (some samples received only one rating). There were 176 ratings for ENGH 302 and 88 ratings for HNRS 110/302. Samples received ratings on three outcomes as well as an "overall" holistic rating. There were no differences in performance between HNRS 110 and HNRS 302, so they were grouped to form a more robust comparison group to ENGH 302. Because analysis showed differences between ENGH 302 and HNRS 110/302, the results are displayed in separate charts.

Figure 78. Assessment Results, ENGH 302

n=176

Figure 79. Assessment Results, HNRS 110/302 (Combined)

CORE: Articulate and refine a question, problem, or challenge — Novice 14.8%, Emerging Proficiency 23.9%, Approaching Proficiency 25.0%, Proficient 30.7%, Exceptional 5.7%

METHOD: Gather and evaluate evidence appropriate to the inquiry — Novice .5%, Emerging Proficiency 40.9%, Approaching Proficiency 26.1%, Proficient 25.0%, Exceptional 3.4%

METHOD: Appropriately analyze scholarly evidence — Novice 12.5%, Emerging Proficiency 36.4%, Approaching Proficiency 31.8%, Proficient 17.0%, Exceptional 2.3%

OVERALL RATING — Novice 12.5%, Emerging Proficiency 33.0%, Approaching Proficiency 25.0%, Proficient 27.3%, Exceptional 1.1%

Legend: ■ Novice ■ Emerging Proficiency ■ Approaching Proficiency ■ Proficient ■ Exceptional

n=88

Highlights from Analysis of Results

Data were analyzed to ascertain differences between courses and among students in achieving the three learning outcomes. Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are ordinal; Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U, (p <.05) was used when analyzing differences between two groups, and Independent-Samples Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to analyze differences across three or more groups or courses. Demographic groups included gender, race/ethnicity, and transfer status. Significant findings (p <.05) are noted below.

- There were significant differences between ENGH 302 and HNRS 110/302 on all outcomes, with HNRS samples performing higher on every outcome.
    - For ENGH 302, more than a third of samples performed at the Emerging Proficiency level, with slightly more performing at Novice on each outcome. About a quarter of these samples performed at the Approaching, Proficient, or Exceptional level (combined).
    - For HNRS 110/302, samples received higher scores, with an average 44.6% performing at Novice or Emerging Proficiency. More than 55% of samples performed at Approaching, Proficient, or Exceptional level (combined).
- *DEMOGRAPHICS:* There were no differences in performance by gender for ENGH 302. For HNRS 110/302, there were differences by gender on the Core outcome, for which

students identified as female (n=60) performed better than students identified as male (n=28). There were no differences by race/ethnicity for any of the three courses.

- *TRANSFER STATUS:* Students who entered Mason as freshmen (n=71) performed significantly better on all outcomes in ENGH 302 than students who entered as transfer (n=101). As all HNRS 110 students enter as freshmen, and there were few HNRS 302 students, no analysis could be performed for HNRS.

Student Self-Assessment

All students who were enrolled in ENGH 100, ENGH 101, ENGH 302, HNRS 110, and HNRS 302 in fall 2018 received an online self-assessment survey at the end of the semester. The retrospective pre-post self-assessment asked students to rate their knowledge and skills on four learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester (pre), and then again at the end of the semester (post). This was the same survey that was administered to students in the Writing Intensive (WI) courses in spring 2018.

For ENGH 100 and 101, 135 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a 7.3% response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all four outcomes (see Figure 80).

Figure 80. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment for ENGH 100 and ENGH 101
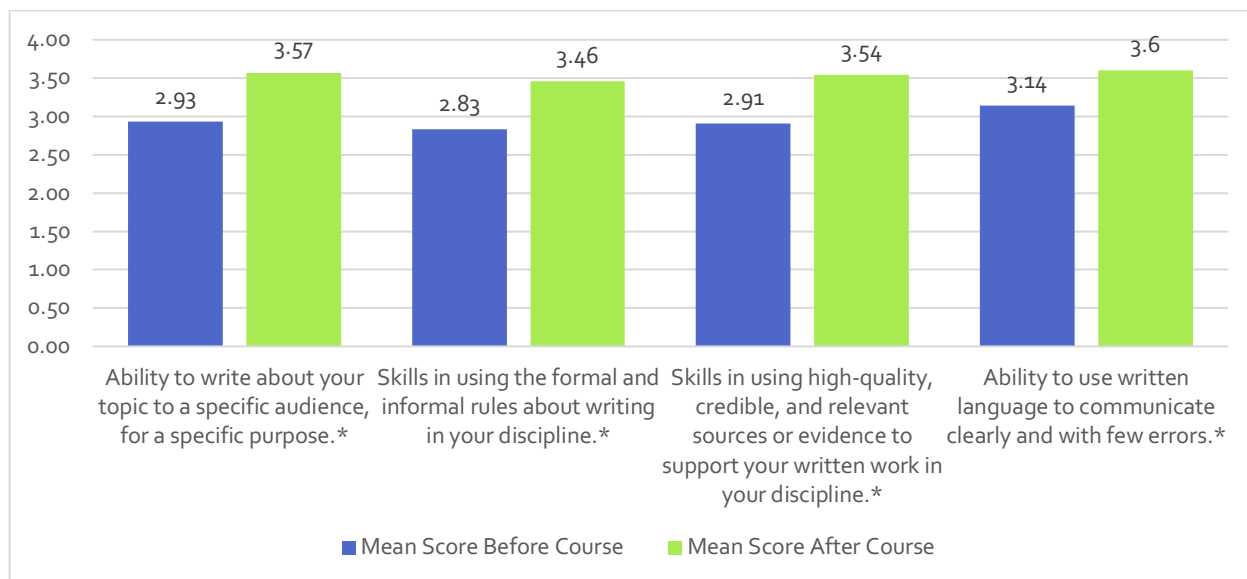
Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=135, * $p < .05$

For ENGH 302, HNRS 110 and 302, 211 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a six percent response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all four outcomes (see Figure 81). There were no differences in responses between ENGH and HNRS students.

Figure 81. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment for ENGH 302, HNRS 110 and 302
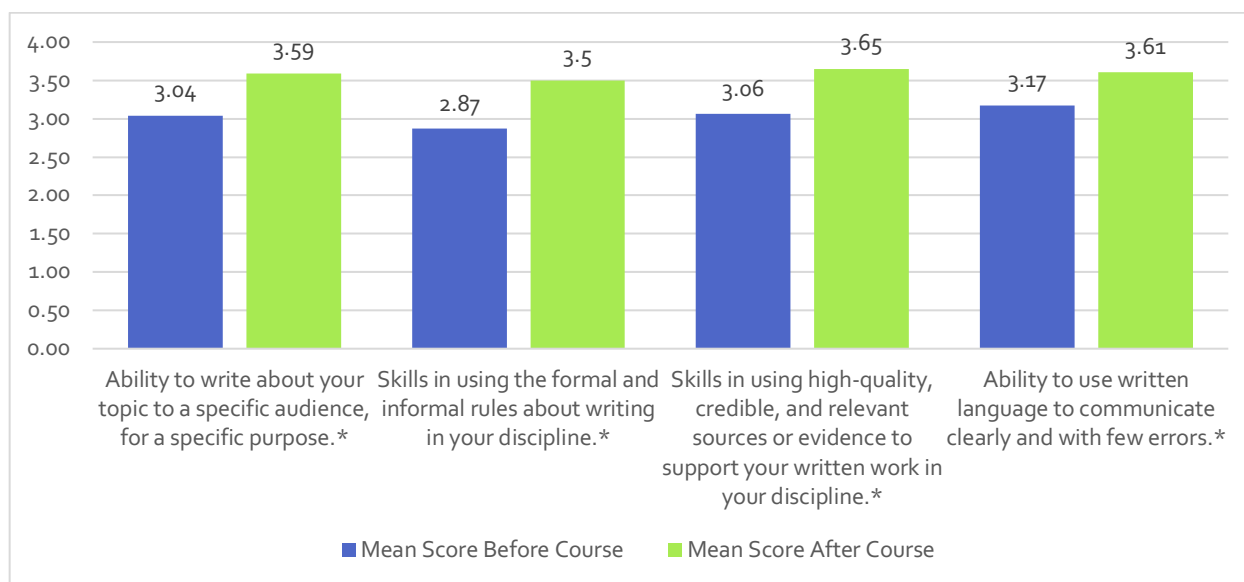
Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=211, * p < .05

How do the Results Meet Expectations?[12]

Given the likelihood that most students in lower division Written Communication courses are in their first or second year at Mason, it was entirely expected that they would perform mostly at the novice or emerging levels across the board. The Composition leadership team had anticipated that a fair percentage of student work would fall in the "No Evidence" category because some elements of the rubric are best measured through a combination of students' writing and reflection on that work. We were not as clear in asking for both of these sets of materials from faculty for submission to the assessment, which means that the "No Evidence" category is likely higher than it would otherwise be because reflective work was not available for many of the samples.

We anticipated that there could be differences in the performance of students in ENGH 100, ENGH 101, and ENGH 122. Because these courses serve various student populations, including students with lower TOEFL scores who take ENGH 122, and because the courses employ different approaches to teaching writing, it is not surprising that there are differences in student performance.

We had suspected that students who take ENGH 100, ENGH 101, or ENGH 122 at Mason would perform better in ENGH 302 than students who do not have this experience. This is not a surprising result, but it is very useful information for our program to consider as we think about how to help transfer students transition into ENGH 302 and how to explain the value of the lower division Written Communication courses at Mason.

---

[12] Narrative for this section was prepared by the English Composition Program leadership

Given the diversity seen at Mason, including in the Written Communication courses, we are very pleased that there are no differences in student performance based on race or ethnicity. Historically, the field of writing studies has highlighted writing program policies and practices that work against students of color and limit their performance in writing classes, and it is encouraging that students seem to be getting adequate support across the board in Mason's writing program, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

How are Results Being Used to Improve Students' Educational Experience?[13]

Because of the lack of reflective material in the lower division Written Communication assessment, our team actually decided to request assessment samples from faculty teaching these classes in fall 2019 that included both students' writing and their reflections. Our hope was to assess this work in spring 2020 to see if there were differences in the "No Evidence" category in particular. However, with COVID-19 and the pivoting we have had to do in order to support our faculty in moving instruction online, we have had to scale back this revised assessment. The work has been collected and blinded, but we likely will not assess it until fall 2020 or spring 2021 in order to do this comparison to these results. We are curious, though, if inclusion of the reflective materials will change how much work is assessed as being in the "No Evidence" category.

Particular attention to the context and purpose for writing has become an increased focus in ENGH 101 in the last 2-3 years, so this is something that we are continuing to pay attention to, build into program templates including a new template focused on students putting together multiple multimodal pieces for a public writing campaign, and that we would expect to see ongoing improvement in over the next few years given relatively recent curricular changes to focus on the rhetorical context and purpose for writing in ENGH 101 and rather recent changes to program policies about template use to achieve more curricular consistency. Only within the past 2-3 years have syllabus templates for new instructors been developed to help them onboard into the program and to create more consistency within the classes, and this is something our program continues to refine (for example, by building online templates for new online instructors).

Support for ENGH 100 in particular has been lacking for many years. In fall 2019, CHSS finally supported the appointment of Anna Habib as Associate Director of Multilingual Composition in the Composition Program, and she also serves as the INTO Mason English Liaison focusing on both the graduate and undergraduate levels, including ENGH 121 and 122, and as the Mason Korea English Liaison. Her appointment as well as support through a term faculty grant in summer 2020 marks a shift in the program towards more support for these classes in particular and for all of our faculty who are teaching multilingual students. She has been working with a task force this year to put together faculty workshops, and she will be working on further

---

[13] Narrative for this section was prepared by the English Composition Program leadership

professional development support and ENGH 100 curriculum materials this summer. We anticipate these will allow for the better support of ENGH 100 students.

Our program is also in the midst of ongoing conversations about alignment between ENGH 100, ENGH 101, and ENGH 121/122. Other programs around the nation have approached alignment between courses in different ways: some have the same learning outcomes for all courses while other differentiate learning outcomes for different courses and student populations. This work will likely continue for several years as we determine the best course forward for Mason's students. These assessment results will enable us to make more informed decisions about how linguistic proficiency levels align with student performance on these outcomes. INTO Mason students in ENGH 122 and ENGH 100 come in with language proficiency levels below the university requirement. It is almost impossible to expect that these students will be able to move beyond the "novice" benchmark on any of the rubric criteria since they are learning English as an additional language, adapting to the cultural expectations of the U.S. academy, while also working towards the Mason Core Written Communication Outcomes.

In order to help students to make well-founded decisions about whether to take ENGH 100 and ENGH 101, which currently is left to student self-selection based on catalog information, we are also discussing the implementation of a directed self-placement process. Such a process, which has been implemented in writing programs across the nation, would help students assess their literacy backgrounds and look at detailed information about these classes to make a strong decision about which class would be best for them. This project is on hold for now because of COVID-19, but we hope to be able to develop this process in the next couple years.

We are also currently gathering data from Advanced Composition courses that track students forward from the lower division Written Communication assessment performed in spring 2019 so that we can perform a longitudinal assessment of how well the same students perform at these different levels. Unlike the fall 2017 and fall 2018 assessment, our assessment of Advanced Composition student work will use the same rubric used to assess work from lower division Written Communication courses in spring 2019 so that we can compare student performance across these classes. This will allow us to consider student performance growth over time and to think further about the alignment between these courses.

Given some of the differences between transfer student performance in ENGH 302 and the performance of those students who have gone through ENGH 101 at Mason, we have been working on creating relationships with advisors that will help students gain the information they need about the class and its prerequisites. One step in this direction was the development of an infographic about the Written Communication and Literature requirements in Mason Core that we developed last year in response to confusion over these requirements[14]. We hope that these show the alignment between these courses and help students and advisors understand how the courses develop students' reading and writing skills.

---

[14] https://composition.gmu.edu/about/writing-requirements

Associate Director Jessica Matthews and Assistant Director Lourdes Fernandez are in the middle of a research project comparing student performance in online, hybrid, and face-to-face versions of ENGH 302 that will help us consider how to best teach students in these modalities. We have found that there are statistically significant higher rates of failure for students who take ENGH 302 online versus those who take it face-to-face or hybrid. Our program is working to support faculty teaching these classes and students who are in these through work with the Stearns Center and through the development of online templates and professional development support for faculty. In addition, Lourdes Fernandez led a hybrid task force this year that has created additional support for faculty teaching hybrid courses in the program. Much of this work has been supported through a *Students as Scholars* grant that has allowed our program to run faculty learning communities and conduct research that otherwise would not have been possible.

Limitations of this Assessment

The rubrics used in this assessment were created by program faculty to assess learning on program-specific outcomes, and course assignments were carefully constructed to align with these outcomes. Samples were collected by random selection, and assessments were normed. In all of these ways, this was a strong assessment. The primary limitation was the smaller than ideal sample sizes for Advanced Composition (ENGH 302 and HNRS 110/302). After many years of conducting assessments each semester on a previous rubric, this assessment focused on validating a new rubric. Still, the sample sizes produce sufficiently robust results for a rubric-based assessment.

Program faculty who work with English language learners and multilingual writers expressed concern that the *ENGH 100/101/122 Student Samples Rubric* may not be completely valid to assess student work from these students because of the developmental process of language and literacy development. Faculty also expressed concern about the training and norming of reviewers to fairly assess this work. These concerns will be addressed with the Composition program leadership as the rubric and assessment process are revisited.

Assessment Rubric(s)

The rubrics used in these assessments were developed by a team of Mason English Composition faculty to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in Written Communication. The rubrics are designed to evaluate student performance on the learning outcomes using authentic work produced in the course of the semester, with increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome.

Table 27. Enrollment in Mason Core Written Communication Courses, AY2015-19

Course	AY2015 #Sections	AY2015 Enroll	AY2016 #Sections	AY2016 Enroll	AY2017 #Sections	AY2017 Enroll	AY2018 #Sections	AY2018 Enroll	AY2019 #Sections	AY2019 Enroll
ENGH 100	14	245	18	271	18	298	19	291	22	286
ENGH 101	131	2,410	130	2,393	124	2,300	143	2,544	140	2,516
ENGH 122	2	22	9	125	12	150	8	103	7	96
Lower Division TOTAL	**147**	**2,677**	**157**	**2,789**	**154**	**2,748**	**170**	**2,938**	**169**	**2,898**
ENGH 302	294	5,984	310	6,175	320	6,370	340	6,811	313	6,258
HNRS 110	12	282	15	373	17	402	18	430	20	482
HNRS 302	0	0	1	18	1	10	2	17	1	26
Advanced TOTAL	**306**	**6,266**	**326**	**6,566**	**338**	**6,782**	**360**	**7,258**	**334**	**6,766**
All Courses TOTAL	**453**	**8,943**	**483**	**9,355**	**492**	**9,530**	**530**	**10,196**	**503**	**9,664**

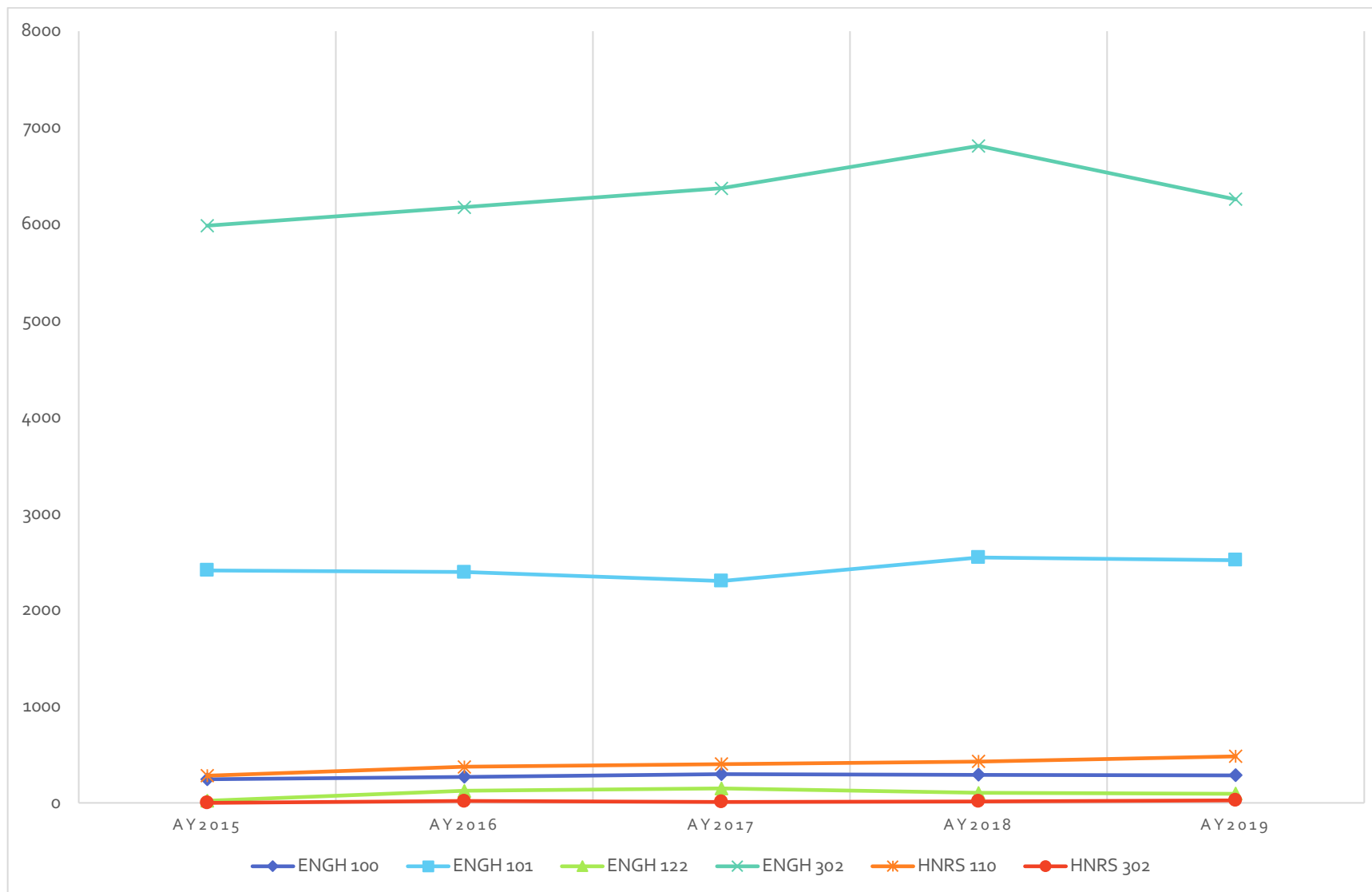Figure 82. Five-Year Enrollment Trends in Mason Core Written Communication Courses, AY2015-19

Table 28. Mann-Whitney U Comparison of Sample Ratings for ENGH 100, Fairfax vs. Korea Campus Sections

	Mean Rank (n)		U	Z	p	Sig.
	Fairfax	Korea				
Rhetorical Flexibility and Approach	68.24 (71)	80.27 (77)	2289.00	-2.027	0.043	*
Rhetorically Appropriate Structural Choices	77.13	77.85	2935.00	-0.129	0.897	
Rhetorically Appropriate Linguistic Choices	79.85 (75)	74.04 (79)	2703.00	-0.955	0.339	
Sources and Evidence	78.59 (78)	80.33 (75)	3044.00	-0.275	0.783	
Synthesis of Ideas	67.70 (70)	80.60 (78)	2254.00	-2.162	0.031	*
Multiple Perspectives	75.36 (74)	81.33 (82)	2802.00	-1.089	0.276	

*p < .05

ENGH 100/101/122 Student Samples Rubric

	Advanced (fully shows evidence of this)	Proficient (mostly shows evidence of this)	Emerging Proficiency (somewhat shows evidence of this)	Novice (little evidence of this)	Not Applicable or No Evidence
Rhetorical Flexibility and Approach: The text effectively situates the reader and demonstrates that the writer is working from a research question/ targeted line of inquiry of manageable scope					
Rhetorically Appropriate Structural Choices: Structural choices (i.e. units of text, moves between units of text, opening and closing moves, etc.) are rhetorically appropriate and facilitate cohesion throughout the text as connected to the purpose, audience, and genre					
Rhetorically Appropriate Linguistic Choices: Linguistic choices (i.e. register, syntax, word choice, etc.) facilitate cohesion throughout the text and reflect an awareness of purpose, audience, and genre.					
Sources and Evidence: The text incorporates an appropriate range of sources in various ways to effectively contribute to a well-evidenced, purposeful text (i.e. support exigence, demonstrate knowledge of convo or missing info in convo, clarify importance of using or extending a key concept, support a point or claim, contend with an idea, etc.)					

	Advanced (fully shows evidence of this)	Proficient (mostly shows evidence of this)	Emerging Proficiency (somewhat shows evidence of this)	Novice (little evidence of this)	Not Applicable or No Evidence
Synthesis of Ideas: Synthesis of ideas demonstrates understanding of the complex conversation surrounding an issue/line of inquiry.					
Multiple Perspectives: Rhetorical and linguistic moves are used to blend multiple sources and perspectives, including the writer's ideas, to serve a targeted line of inquiry (i.e. the writer aligns with, deepens, complicates, or extends ideas from sources through the use of meta-commentary, signal phrases, connectives, strategic citation integration, etc.)					

English 302 Revised Research Project Rubric, Adapted from the *Students as Scholars* Master Rubric

For text-based scholarship that reviews and contributes to a current conversation in an academic or professional field

Student Learning Outcomes	Level of Competence				
	5 Exceptional	4 Proficient	3 Approaching Proficiency (Inquiry)	2 Emerging Proficiency	1 Novice
CORE: Articulate and refine a question, problem, or challenge. Appropriate text-based question work: • *Guided by or leads to a complex claim supported by a demonstrated line of inquiry* • *Complex claim of appropriate scope is situated within a particular field of study*	Articulate and refine a novel, focused, and manageable question, problem or challenge that has the strong potential to contribute to the field.	Articulate and refine a focused and manageable question, problem, or challenge that may contribute to the field.	Articulate a question, problem, or challenge that is generally relevant and appropriate in scope.	Articulate a question, problem or challenge that is too narrow or general to be addressed appropriately in a scholarly project.	Not yet able to articulate an appropriate scholarly question, problem, or challenge.
METHOD: Gather and evaluate evidence appropriate to the inquiry • *Incorporates credible, accurate, and relevant sources appropriate to the discipline/field/profession* • *Use structure, style, citations appropriate to scholarship in the discipline/field/profession*	Acquire high-quality information or data using sophisticated strategies; use nuanced criteria to judge the credibility of the evidence.	Acquire information or data using effective, well-designed strategies; consistently use appropriate criteria to judge the credibility of evidence.	Acquire information or data using appropriate strategies; sometimes able to judge the credibility of the evidence.	Begin to recognize and apply appropriate strategies for gathering and evaluating information or data.	Not yet able to gather or evaluate evidence appropriate to the inquiry.
METHOD: Appropriately analyze scholarly evidence • *Links ideas among outside sources in meaningful ways (synthesis)* • *Clear distinction between student's view and views of others*	Provide sophisticated analysis or synthesis of new and previous evidence to make original, insightful contributions to knowledge.	Consistently analyze or synthesize new and previous evidence to make important contributions to knowledge.	Analyze or synthesize new and/or previous evidence appropriate to the inquiry.	Demonstrate a limited ability to analyze or synthesize evidence.	Not yet able to analyze or synthesize information or data.