

Writing assessment of Bauer undergraduate and graduate programs

The purpose of this document is to summarize the writing assessment performed with the assistance of the UH Writing Center within Bauer's undergraduate and graduate programs as of August 2009. The following provides a summary of the assessment, scoring rubric, writing resources used in the course, and a description of whether assessment is performed by the instructor or the UH Writing Center. Information regarding resources was gathered from course syllabi posted on the internet. Finally, it is important to note that there may be other Bauer courses that include significant writing and assessment but are not included or summarized below.

GENB 2301: Connecting Bauer to Business

I. Business Writing Evaluation (BWE) : Assessment and rubric

The BWE is a timed writing assignment designed and rated by the UH Writing Center to measure the basic communication skills and writing competence of students entering undergraduate degree programs in the Bauer College. Starting fall 2009, assessment will be performed by EduMetry, a professional assessment firm.

Students complete the Business Writing Evaluation (BWE) as part of their entry to the major. Students who do not meet the minimum standard of writing competency are tutored intensively in the Business Writing Tutorial (BWT).

Once students referred to participate in the tutorials satisfactorily complete a business writing portfolio, they both clear GENB 2301 and take with them a dossier that they will be able to use in their job search upon completion of their degree.

Students will receive one of three ratings based on the rubric below:

- **Scores of 3, 3.5, or 4:** the BWE requirement is met (no further requirements)
- **Scores of 2 or 2.5:** the BWE requirement is met, but with a recommendation (no further requirements, but follow-up with the UH Writing Center is recommended to improve writing skills)
- **Score of 1 or 1.5:** Referral to the BWT (student is required to begin the Business Writing Tutorial the following semester)

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| 4 | The writing sample demonstrates a particularly effective ability to generate detailed content appropriate to the purpose as well as the ability to organize and support it in an effective manner. It uses clear and coherent language and formatting that conform to the expectations of professional and academic communities. |
| 3 | The writing sample demonstrates a solid ability to generate detailed content appropriate to the purpose as well as the ability to organize and support it. It uses language and formatting that conform to the expectations of professional and academic communities. |
| 2 | The writing sample is uneven or undeveloped in its attempts to generate and organize appropriate content. The use of language does not consistently conform to the conventions of professional and academic communities. |
| 1 | The writing sample fails to demonstrate competency in basic writing. The writing sample evidences recurring problems with respect to the generation or organization of content and/or conformity to professional and academic conventions for language usage. |

I. Business Writing Tutorial (BWT)

The Business Writing Tutorial (BWT) is an outcomes-driven individualized program of instruction designed by the UH Writing Center to develop basic communication skills and writing competence. Students referred to the BWT work one-on-one with a Writing Consultant to complete a portfolio of business-related written work. They will receive practice in and support for the “threshold skill” of writing outside of the pressure of course demands.

Students prepare, draft, revise, and finish two assignments, a résumé with cover letter and a solicited proposal. Once the first assignment has been satisfactorily completed, the student can move on to the second, so the student has a real stake in determining how long the tutorial program lasts. This is a truly student-driven process. When the student has completed the two assignments satisfactorily, the student clears the BWT requirement.

GENB 4350: Business Law and Ethics

GENB 4350 is designated as a “Writing in the Discipline” Core¹ course. Students complete five assignments totaling approximately 5,000 words. Assignments require students to analyze ethical dilemmas applying a variety of ethical theories.

All students are required to meet with the writing center once during the semester to discuss their papers within the context of one of the three stages of writing selected by the student – (1) prewriting/topic development, (2) organization and drafting, or (3) revising and rewriting.

¹ The UH Core requirements include 3 hours of a writing intensive course (i.e., a course requiring students to write at least 3,000 words, including at least one piece of work completed outside of class and returned to the student prior to the end of the semester with the instructor's written evaluation of grammar, style, and content).

Assessment and rubric

Prior to Fall 2009, papers were assessed by the course administrator with the assistance of teaching assistants. Starting Fall 2009, papers will be assessed by the course administrator with the assistance from EduMetry using a scoring rubric developed by the Writing Center and the course administrator.

| A | B | C | D | F |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Clearly arranged and organized; Professional tone (<i>i.e.</i> , appropriate choice of words for business writing); Sentences are easily understood, concise and effective; AND No noticeable editing errors. | For the most part clearly arranged and organized; Professional tone; Sentences are functional; AND/OR Very few editing errors. | Confusing in areas due to unclear arrangement or lack of organization; Many sentences are overly simple or needlessly complicated; AND/OR Several editing errors but not so many that paper is difficult to read. | Confusing throughout due to unclear arrangement or lack of organization; Most sentences are overly simple or needlessly complicated; AND/OR So many editing errors that paper is difficult to read. | Wholly ignores assignment instructions; Sentences are incoherent or nonsensical; AND/OR Paper is difficult to read, careless, irresponsible. |
| Issue discussed is an ethical one and is the most pressing; Arguments and sentences are well-supported and rational; Includes full consideration of stakeholders and effect of appropriate choices on them; AND Contains accurate and full definition of ethical theories. | For the most part arguments and sentences are well-supported and rational; AND Missing one or more of the elements under grade "A" column. | Many arguments and sentences are not rational or well-supported. | Most arguments or sentences are not rational or well-supported. | Most of the paper remains unfinished AND/OR; Rambles incoherently. |

Resources

UH Writing center: <http://www.uh.edu/writecen/Resources/GrammarAndDocumentation.php>

The Elements of Style (Strunk, 1918) <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

Avoiding Plagiarism: <http://www.class.uh.edu/wconline/plagiarism/>

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Critical thinking: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/page.cfm?CategoryID=51>

Critical thinking: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/page.cfm?CategoryID=68&endnav=1>

Writing for GENB 4350 (online module posted on course website)

Critical thinking for GENB 4350 (online module posted on course website)

ACCT 7362: Tax Research

The Writing Center offers multiple business writing workshops and individual consultations with ESL-specialized writing consultants to students of this graduate-level accounting course.

The research portion of the assessment asks students to review the facts provided in a tax research project and conduct the appropriate research using RIA Checkpoint. Once the research is completed, students are required to prepare a client letter highlighting the various tax rules applicable to the case as well as the likely tax classification of the loss encountered in the case.

Assessment and rubric

The memos are evaluated by the UH Writing Center using a scoring rubric created in by the Associate Director for Writing Programs and the instructor of ACCT 7362.

| Criteria Area | Missing (does not meet expectations): 1 | Partial (meets expectations): 2 | Full (exceeds expectations): 3 |
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| Organization | | | |
| <i>follows accepted letter style (salutation, conclusion, facts, tax issues, recommendations, closing)</i> | Major deviation from prescribed segmentation | A few noticeable minor deviations from prescribed segmentation | Follows prescribed segmentation completely |
| <i>easy to read and follow</i> | Appears disjointed, unclear, or disorganized. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases and transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases effectively, including implicit and explicit transitions, creating patterned flow between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. |
| Mechanics | | | |
| <i>grammar, spelling, punctuation</i> | Distracts reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING. | Does not distract reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING. | N/A |
| <i>sentence construction</i> | Overly simple or needlessly complex writing. Poorly chosen or mistaken vocabulary. READER STRUGGLES TO GET THE POINT. | Communicates an adequate message relatively effectively. Functional editorial choices. READER GETS THE POINT FAIRLY READILY. | Communicates complex ideas concisely. Exemplary editorial choices regarding sentence structure and length. POINT(S) MADE TO THE READER WITH AUTHORITY. |

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| <i>professional business writing</i> | Rude, crude, or inconsistent tone; detached from or contrary to situation or purpose. | Works mostly within conventions for salient genre of business communication, generally meeting needs of situation and audience. | Reflects awareness of situation makes judicious use of conventions of the salient genre of business communication, attends effectively to audience needs. |
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Resources

Effective Writing: A handbook for accountants (May and May 2007)

Bauer College of Business Writing Style Guide (course website)

The accountant's guide to professional communication (McKay and Rosa 2000)

FINA 6387: Managerial Analysis

Students are asked to complete a character sketch, which is one component of a larger career project required to be completed for the course. Within this sketch, students are to identify some of the characteristics they would like to portray to employers when interviewing. Students are to include specific evidence where and when these characteristics have been demonstrated.

Assessment and rubric

The character sketches are evaluated by the UH Writing Center using a scoring rubric created by the Associate Director for Writing Programs in conjunction with the MBA curriculum committee.

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|---|---|
| Scoring Traits | Exceeds expectations | Meets expectations | Does not meet expectations |
| <i>Clarity and conciseness. Student expresses ideas fully and clearly using words economically.</i> | Communicates complex ideas concisely. Exemplary editorial choices regarding sentence structure and length. POINT(S) MADE TO THE READER WITH AUTHORITY. | Communicates an adequate message relatively effectively. Functional editorial choices. READER GETS THE POINT FAIRLY READILY. | Overly simple or needlessly complex writing. Poorly chosen or mistaken vocabulary. READER STRUGGLES TO GET THE POINT. |
| <i>Professional tone. Student adopts and maintains a tone appropriate to the situation and/or purpose, genre, and audience.</i> | Reflects awareness of situation makes judicious use of conventions of the salient genre of business communication, attends effectively to audience needs. | Works mostly within conventions for salient genre of business communication, generally meeting needs of situation and audience. | Rude, crude, or inconsistent tone; detached from or contrary to situation or purpose. |
| <i>Organization. Student organizes ideas and signals relationships between them to achieve unity, coherence, and/or flow.</i> | Uses sequencing devices or phrases effectively, including implicit and explicit transitions, creating patterned flow between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases and transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Appears disjointed, unclear, or disorganized. |

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| <p><u>Grammar and mechanics.</u> <i>Student successfully proofreads and edits written work.</i></p> | | <p>Does not distract reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> | <p>Distracts reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> |
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ACCT 6331: Financial Accounting

Students in the Full Time Day, Part-Time Evening, and Executive MBA programs are asked to construct a memo stating their opinion as to whether or not the college should adopt a strategy of offering specialized MBA degrees by industry. The memo is to address the positive and negative aspects of their position. Prior to completing the memo, students are given an article from *Business Week*, which addresses this topic.

Assessment and rubric

Representatives from the UH Writing Center complete the scoring of the memos using the scoring rubric created by the Associate Director for Writing Programs in conjunction with the MBA curriculum committee.

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|---|---|
| Scoring Traits | Exceeds expectations | Meets expectations | Does not meet expectations |
| <i>Clarity and conciseness. Student expresses ideas fully and clearly using words economically.</i> | Communicates complex ideas concisely. Exemplary editorial choices regarding sentence structure and length. POINT(S) MADE TO THE READER WITH AUTHORITY. | Communicates an adequate message relatively effectively. Functional editorial choices. READER GETS THE POINT FAIRLY READILY. | Overly simple or needlessly complex writing. Poorly chosen or mistaken vocabulary. READER STRUGGLES TO GET THE POINT. |
| <i>Professional tone. Student adopts and maintains a tone appropriate to the situation and/or purpose, genre, and audience.</i> | Reflects awareness of situation makes judicious use of conventions of the salient genre of business communication, attends effectively to audience needs. | Works mostly within conventions for salient genre of business communication, generally meeting needs of situation and audience. | Rude, crude, or inconsistent tone; detached from or contrary to situation or purpose. |
| <i>Organization. Student organizes ideas and signals relationships between them to achieve unity, coherence, and/or flow.</i> | Uses sequencing devices or phrases effectively, including implicit and explicit transitions, creating patterned flow between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases and transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Appears disjointed, unclear, or disorganized. |

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| <p><u>Grammar and mechanics.</u> Student successfully proofreads and edits written work.</p> | | <p>Does not distract reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> | <p>Distracts reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> |
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MANA 6332: Organizational Behavior and Management

In fall 2008, the final exam from MANA 6332 was used to evaluate Executive MBA students' written communication skills.

Assessment and rubric

The scoring of the evaluation was completed by the instructor using the following scoring rubric.

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|---|---|
| Scoring Traits | Exceeds expectations | Meets expectations | Does not meet expectations |
| <i>Clarity and conciseness. Student expresses ideas fully and clearly using words economically.</i> | Communicates complex ideas concisely. Exemplary editorial choices regarding sentence structure and length. POINT(S) MADE TO THE READER WITH AUTHORITY. | Communicates an adequate message relatively effectively. Functional editorial choices. READER GETS THE POINT FAIRLY READILY. | Overly simple or needlessly complex writing. Poorly chosen or mistaken vocabulary. READER STRUGGLES TO GET THE POINT. |
| <i>Professional tone. Student adopts and maintains a tone appropriate to the situation and/or purpose, genre, and audience.</i> | Reflects awareness of situation makes judicious use of conventions of the salient genre of business communication, attends effectively to audience needs. | Works mostly within conventions for salient genre of business communication, generally meeting needs of situation and audience. | Rude, crude, or inconsistent tone; detached from or contrary to situation or purpose. |
| <i>Organization. Student organizes ideas and signals relationships between them to achieve unity, coherence, and/or flow.</i> | Uses sequencing devices or phrases effectively, including implicit and explicit transitions, creating patterned flow between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases and transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Appears disjointed, unclear, or disorganized. |
| <i>Grammar and mechanics. Student successfully proofreads and edits written work.</i> | | Does not distract reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING. | Distracts reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING. |

GENB 7397: Corporate Politics

Students in the Executive MBA program are asked to complete a one-page mini-case study of an ethical situation faced by an employee at their place of employment. Each student is required to state why he or she feels this was an ethical issue and provide a recommendation as to how the employee should have handled the situation.

Assessment and rubric

Representatives from the UH Writing Center complete the scoring of the memos using the following scoring rubric created by the Associate Director for Writing Programs in conjunction with the MBA curriculum committee.

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|---|---|
| Scoring Traits | Exceeds expectations | Meets expectations | Does not meet expectations |
| <u>Clarity and conciseness.</u> Student expresses ideas fully and clearly using words economically. | Communicates complex ideas concisely. Exemplary editorial choices regarding sentence structure and length. POINT(S) MADE TO THE READER WITH AUTHORITY. | Communicates an adequate message relatively effectively. Functional editorial choices. READER GETS THE POINT FAIRLY READILY. | Overly simple or needlessly complex writing. Poorly chosen or mistaken vocabulary. READER STRUGGLES TO GET THE POINT. |
| <u>Professional tone.</u> Student adopts and maintains a tone appropriate to the situation and/or purpose, genre, and audience. | Reflects awareness of situation makes judicious use of conventions of the salient genre of business communication, attends effectively to audience needs. | Works mostly within conventions for salient genre of business communication, generally meeting needs of situation and audience. | Rude, crude, or inconsistent tone; detached from or contrary to situation or purpose. |
| <u>Organization.</u> Student organizes ideas and signals relationships between them to achieve unity, coherence, and/or flow. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases effectively, including implicit and explicit transitions, creating patterned flow between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Uses sequencing devices or phrases and transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. | Appears disjointed, unclear, or disorganized. |

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| <p><u>Grammar and mechanics.</u> <i>Student successfully proofreads and edits written work.</i></p> | | <p>Does not distract reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> | <p>Distracts reader with errors of grammar, spelling, or other mechanics. UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF EDITING.</p> |
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MARK 8379: Academic Writing and Presenting

Doctoral students in the Marketing Department develop writing strategies for publishing in academic journals, presenting at professional conferences, and navigating the competitive academic job market.

The seminar meets for a full day on each Friday during the first summer semester. Students spend mornings with Marketing faculty member and afternoons with Writing Center instructors. Curriculum is developed and taught collaboratively by the Bauer Marketing department and writing pedagogy specialists from the Writing Center.

Resources

Elements of Style by Strunk <http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

<http://info.emeraldinsight.com/authors/index.htm>

Steinberg's 21 Writing Tips

<http://perl.plover.com/yak/presentation/>

<http://writing.engr.psu.edu/csp.html>

<http://www.bauer.uh.edu/jhess/documents/>

StaelinHowtoWriteReadablePapersforMarketingScience.pdf