

RE: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses: Composition Teachers, Process-Approach Pedagogy, and Basic Writers

DATE: 3 November 2004

We have been gathering data with the program-wide survey: Questionnaire for ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 Courses. In this memo, we will focus on these topics found in that questionnaire: our composition teachers, process-approach pedagogy, and basic writers. In attached Tables 1 and 2, summative results for the relevant questions are found regarding the spring of 2003, spring of 2004, and the fall of 2003.

We have also collected data from the summer of 2003, when the previous curriculum was in effect and when the online scheduling began (when the one credit hour was scheduled as “online” for all ENGH 0890 and ENGH 0990 sections). But we do not have data from the Summer of 2004 for a comparative analysis. Analysis of summer results, therefore, is postponed to next semester.

The following record of our data gathering efforts includes important notes about the context for analyzing results herein:

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Note</i>
<b>Spring 2003</b>	<b>The previous curriculum was in effect.</b>
<b>Spring 2004</b>	<b>The program-wide portfolio curriculum was in effect.</b>

**Here, we have an opportunity to compare one spring semester with another: the spring 2003 semester represents the previous curriculum and the spring 2004, the new portfolio curriculum, to be referred to as “portfolio curriculum” hereafter.**

**Fall 2003            The portfolio curriculum began.**

When we have results from the fall of 2004, we have an opportunity for a comparative analysis to be done in the next semester.

## OVERALL ANALYSIS

As reflected in the following table, when asked if they have improved their academic writing, a majority of ENGH 0890 and 0990 students report “strongly agreeing” or “agreeing” that their academic writing has improved (see question 11). This measure of satisfaction is relevant to both the previous curriculum and portfolio curriculum. Percentages here are rounded off to the nearest percentile, and hereafter, numbered questions are from the Questionnaire.

<b>11. I think my academic writing has improved as a result of this course.</b>		
	<b>ENGH 0890</b>	<b>ENGH 0990</b>
<b>Spring 2003 (previous curriculum)</b>	<b>89 %</b>	<b>92 %</b>
<b>Spring 2004 (portfolio curriculum)</b>	<b>87 %</b>	<b>95 %</b>
<b>Fall 2003 (portfolio curriculum)</b>	<b>92 %</b>	<b>95 %</b>

When asked if their learning to revise helped them develop as writers, students expressed even greater self-awareness that their writing has improved (see question 1). Here again, the students’ awareness and apparent satisfaction is relevant to both the previous curriculum and portfolio curriculum. As before, the following percentages represent both “strongly agree” and “agree” responses.

1. Learning to revise my papers helped me develop as a writer.		
	ENGH 0890	ENGH 0990
Spring 2003 (previous curriculum)	97 %	97 %
Spring 2004 (portfolio curriculum)	97 %	98 %
Fall 2003 (portfolio curriculum)	98 %	98 %

## PREVIOUS CURRICULUM VS. PORTFOLIO CURRICULUM

The portfolio curriculum may have benefitted the ENGH 0890 students more than the ENGH 0990 students. One way to measure this possibility is to compare results from the spring of 2003, the previous curriculum, to results from the spring of 2004, the portfolio curriculum. The ENGH 0890 students' self-reported satisfaction increases when experiencing the portfolio curriculum; whereas, the ENGH 0990 students' self-reported satisfaction is not as strongly expressed when comparing only the "strongly agree" responses on these topics:

- *Informal Writing*  
Question 12: The informal writing activities (such as journal writing, freewriting, and in-class writing) improved my confidence in my own writing ability.
- *Academic Writing*  
Question 11: I think my academic writing has improved as a result of this course.
- *Revised Writing*  
Question 1: Learning to revise my papers helped me develop as a writer.
- *Reading Ability*  
Question 7: Because of this course, I think that my reading ability has improved.

### Questions 12, 11, 1, and 7

	"Strongly Agree" ENGH 0890	"Strongly Agree" ENGH 0990
12.	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 26 % Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 31 % ( <b>higher</b> )	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 27 % ( <b>higher</b> ) Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 21 %
11.	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 35 % Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 40 % ( <b>higher</b> )	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 45 % ( <b>higher</b> ) Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 39 %
1.	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 44 % Previous Curriculum Spring 2004: 63 % ( <b>higher</b> )	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 52 % ( <b>higher</b> ) Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 43 %
7.	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 21 % Previous Curriculum Spring 2004: 24 % ( <b>higher</b> )	Previous Curriculum Spring 2003: 27 % ( <b>higher</b> ) Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004: 23 %

Although these findings may indicate that ENGH 0890 students were more satisfied with the portfolio curriculum, these same findings may indicate that ENGH 0890 students had the most to learn as compared to ENGH 0990 students.

### Question 6

Also, in the portfolio curriculum (see question 6), learning in groups or more process-approach and social processes seemed to have increased in ENGH 0890. In ENGH 0990, slightly more effective group work

seemed to exist in the previous curriculum in spring 2003 as compared to the spring of 2004. The most productive group work existed in the fall of 2003 regarding ENGH 0990. That is, generally in the portfolio curriculum, effective group work has increased particularly in ENGH 0890 according to students' perceptions.

6. Working in groups increased my success in this course.						
	ENGH 0890			ENGH 0990		
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
Previous curriculum Spring 2003	21.4%	51%	72.4%	21.5%	52.3%	73.8%
Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004	30.7%	46.7%	77.4%	27.5%	44.2%	71.7%
Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003	24.6%	57%	81.6%	27.1%	50.2%	77.3%

## CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

Nevertheless, significant percentages of students believe that when they work in groups, that work is not effective whether findings refer to the previous curriculum or the portfolio curriculum (see question 6).

6. Working in groups increased my success in this course.								
	ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990			
	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	We did not work in groups	Total	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	We did not work in groups	Total
Previous curriculum Spring 2003	16.3%	2.2%	9.2%	27.7%	14.3%	2.1%	8.4%	24.8%
Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004	14.7%	4%	2.7%	21.4%	15.9%	4.7%	7.3%	27.9%
Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003	11.4%	1.8%	4.4%	17.6%	16.1%	2.6%	2.6%	21.3%

These findings may be interpreted in light of some ENGH 0990 courses being taught completely online. In the fall of 2004, 444 ENGH 0990 students were enrolled in mid-October. Of that group, 13% were enrolled in fully online sections. In the fall of 2004, no ENGH 0890 students were enrolled in fully online courses. The consideration of fully online courses may moderate the finding regarding ENGH 0990 – that students believe that they are not working effectively in groups – but that finding for ENGH 0890 seems demonstrative. *Critical Question:* Do we need workshops for teachers in order to improve the effectiveness of group work?

### Question 12

An apparent difficulty of integrating informal writing into our ENGH 0890 and 0990 classes is another area of concern, relevant to the department's commitment to a process-approach pedagogy (see question 12).

12. The informal writing activities (such as journal writing, freewriting, and in-class writing) improved my confidence in my own writing ability.								
	ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990			
	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Did not occur enough for me to say	Total	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Did not occur enough for me to say	Total
Previous curriculum Spring 2003	4.1%	4.1%	9.2%	17.4%	6.8%	.8%	9.3%	16.9%
Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004	8%	0%	4%	12%	15%	.4%	7.3%	22.7%
Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003	12.3%	0%	.9%	13.2%	8.8%	1.1%	3.7%	13.7%

Here, if the department is committed to a process-approach pedagogy, then connecting informal to formal writing may be a concern. *Critical Question*: Do we need to expand faculty development to include how informal writing may be used in support of formal writing?

### Question 3

Furthermore, ENGH 0890 and 0990 students perceive that they are often not receiving any one-on-one instruction, not during office hours or during class time (see question 3).

3. My teacher provided me with one-on-one instruction during office hours or class time.								
	ENGH 0890				ENGH 0990			
	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Never Happened	Total	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Never Happened	Total
Previous curriculum Spring 2003	12.2%	1%	3.1%	16.3%	1.7%	0%	4.6%	6.3%
Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004	2.7%	1.3%	6.7%	10.7%	2.1%	.9%	7.7%	10.7%
Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003	3.5%	2.6%	6.1%	12.2%	1.1%	0%	5.9%	7%

On the one hand, considering that non-contract faculty members do not have offices, we may consider how remarkable that more students have not received one-on-one instruction. We may note that one-on-one instruction seems to have increased with the implementation of the portfolio curriculum. But, on the other hand, consider that one-on-one instruction.....

- Promotes retention by facilitating faculty mentors for developmental students.
- Facilitates best practices in composition pedagogy, i.e., defines student-teacher conferences.
- Represents the department's liberatory and interventionist educational philosophy.

Consider, too, that not only does a lack of office space but also class size affects interpreting data.

*Critical Questions:* Do we need workshops on how to conduct student-teacher conferences? Or, before that, do we need to resolve office space and class size issues?

Question 4

Regarding helpful grammar instruction, a positive result is that a majority of ENGH 0890 and 0990 students “strongly agree” that they are receiving helpful grammar instruction (see question 4). This finding is remarkable because in eight of ten questions that are represented in this report, a majority of students usually choose “agree,” not “strongly agree,” as their typical response.

<b>4. I received helpful grammar instruction from my teacher.</b>						
	<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>		
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Previous curriculum Spring 2003</b>	44.9%	37.8%	82.7%	51.5%	34.6%	86.1%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004</b>	53.3%	32%	85.3%	47.5%	35.2%	82.8%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003</b>	43.9%	39.5%	83.4%	50.9%	38.5%	89.4%

As a faculty group, however, we may expect that ENGH 0890 students would consistently receive more effective grammar instruction as compared to ENGH 0990 students. Our students’ perceptions if not their experiences differ somewhat with this expectation. Specifically, our concern here may be that in the spring 2003 and fall 2003, more ENGH 0990 students “agree” and “strongly agree” that they receive more helpful grammar instruction as compared to the ENGH 0890 students. *Critical Question:* Do we expect that our ENGH 0890 students would receive more or less grammar instruction as compared to our ENGH 0990 students?

Question 2

I think that when the portfolio curriculum was implemented, contract faculty had hoped that composition classrooms would become more social or more student-centered. Whether students perceive lectures as effective may bear on this student-centeredness (see question 2). Apparently, effective lectures have lessened in the portfolio curriculum. *Critical Question:* Would our faculty benefit from a workshop on the role and topics of lectures for composition courses?

<b>2. I consider lectures to be an effective use of class time.</b>						
	<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>		
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Previous curriculum Spring 2003</b>	33.7%	57.1%	90.8%	46%	45.6%	91.2%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004</b>	24%	62.7%	86.7%	25.8%	53.2%	79%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003</b>	26.3%	62.3%	88.6%	26%	57.9%	82.9%

Questions 5 and 10

A part of a student-centered curriculum may be students choosing their own topics for papers. In composition scholarship, process-approach pedagogy as a definition for “best practices” also supports students picking their own topics. We had two questions on “topic choice” on the questionnaire (see

question 5 and 10). Conclusions may be suspect, however, because when a student “chooses” his or her own topic is difficult to know given that the student is always responding to an assignment written by a teacher!?! *Critical Question:* Do we need to make a greater effort to have our students choose their topics for papers?

<b>5. In this course, I prefer writing when I can choose the topics for my papers.</b>						
	<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>		
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Previous curriculum Spring 2003</b>	43.9%	40.8%	84.7%	53.6%	35%	88.6%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004</b>	42.7%	48%	90.7%	49.8%	36.1%	85.4%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003</b>	43.9%	40.4%	84.3%	50.5%	32.6%	83.1%

<b>10. I prefer writing my papers in this course when specific topics are assigned.</b>						
	<b>ENGH 0890</b>			<b>ENGH 0990</b>		
	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Previous curriculum Spring 2003</b>	28.6%	5.1%	33.7%	38%	6.8%	44.8%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Spring 2004</b>	32%	9.3%	41.3%	37.3%	9.4%	46.7%
<b>Portfolio Curriculum Fall 2003</b>	25.4%	2.6%	28%	37.7%	3.3%	41%

## QUESTIONS

To prioritize the critical questions mentioned previously, two groups of questions are presented: those representing a moderate concern (15% to 20% of students having the concern) and those representing larger concerns (over 20% of students having the concern).

Moderate Concerns as Represented by Critical Questions:

- Do we expect that our ENGH 0890 students would receive more or less grammar instruction as compared to our ENGH 0990 students?
- Do we need to expand faculty development to include how informal writing may be used in support of formal writing?

Larger Concerns as Represented by Critical Questions:

- Do we need to make a greater effort to have our students choose their own topics for papers?
- Do we need workshops for teachers in order to improve the effectiveness of group work?

I look forward to the conversation about these research findings, concerns, and questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.