

## Assessment Grants

### Application Form for 2008-2009

**Submission Deadline: May 1, 2008**

**The name of the project:** ERAU Writing Rubric—Implementation Follow-Up

**Total dollar amount requested from Assessment Grant funds:** \$4000

If the department intends to provide matching funds, please include the total dollar amount of matching funds. Otherwise leave this blank: \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary contact:**

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**Objective of the project:**

Supported by a 2007-2008 assessment mini-grant, a group of more than 30 Worldwide instructors developed a writing rubric meant to assist instructors who are not English teachers in the grading of the writing portion of their students' assignments. The results of that project indicated that the rubric had the potential to help instructors achieve better consistency in grading, and that the rubric provided a practical means to give precise, targeted feedback to students to help them improve their writing.

This 2008-2009 project is meant to follow up as the rubric is released for general use throughout the Worldwide Campus. In particular, the project seeks to determine the following:

1. how much the rubric is being used by Worldwide instructors;
2. the reason/s why the rubric is not being used (if that is the case); and
3. for those who are using the rubric:
  - a. the parts of the rubric that are hardest to work with and why;
  - b. the parts of the rubric that are working the best and why.

**Participants:**

Dr. Terri Maue (project coordinator), Discipline Chair, English & Humanities, Worldwide Campus  
Dr. Joe Allen, Discipline Chair, Mathematics & Computer Science, Worldwide Campus  
Four volunteers to administer follow-up surveys and collect responses  
Brainstorming group of 7-10 Worldwide instructors from all disciplines  
All Worldwide instructors (on ground and online) from all disciplines

**Description of the project:**

The project will proceed as follows:

1. A survey will be developed and offered online to all ERAU Worldwide instructors at the end of the May, August, and October 2008, and the January 2009 terms (so in August, October, December, and March, respectively). The survey will collect trend data on the percentage of instructors who are using the rubric, and also on the extent to which they are using the rubric (in whole or in part). The survey will also attempt to determine the reasons for using or not using the rubric in whole or in part.
2. After the survey is administered each term, 10-20 additional instructors will be contacted by volunteers to try to collect further information.
3. The survey responses will be analyzed to identify any problem areas in the rubric.
4. A group of 7-10 instructor volunteers will study the results and brainstorm ways to improve the rubric. They will revise the rubric, thus completing a cycle of assessment and improvement. The revised rubric should be ready for distribution by July 2009.

The goal is to find out how widely the rubric is being used, and what to do to increase both the usage of the rubric and its usefulness. The rubric should be viewed as a living document, with the expectation that it will be refined based on the experiences of those who are using it.

**Timeline:**

| Due Date                     | Task  |
|------------------------------|---|
| August 1                     | Complete initial and follow-up survey development   |
| August 15-September 15       | Administer initial survey for term just completed   |
| October 15                   | Complete Aug-Sept data analysis<br>Administer follow-up survey                                  |
| October 15-November 15       | Administer initial survey for term just completed   |
| December 15                  | Complete Oct-Nov data analysis<br>Administer follow-up survey                                   |
| December 15-January 15, 2009 | Administer initial survey for term just completed   |
| February 15                  | Complete Dec-Jan data analysis<br>Administer follow-up survey                                   |
| March 15-April 15            | Administer initial survey for term just completed   |
| May 15                       | Complete Mar-Apr data analysis and full trend analysis (Aug-Apr)<br>Administer follow-up survey |
| May 30-June 15               | Volunteer instructors study the responses and brainstorm improvements to the rubric             |
| June 15                      | Teleconference with instructors   |
| July 15, 2009                | Revised rubric ready for dissemination  |

**Assessment Plan:**

Expected project outcomes:

- Discover how much the new writing rubric is being used, what the obstacles are to wider and/or easier use, and what is working well.
- Develop improvements to foster more widespread use and easier use of the writing rubric.

Alignment of project outcomes with overall student learning outcomes and desired program outcomes:

The 2007-2008 project aligned with desired student learning outcomes by providing a tool (the rubric) that would support improvement in student writing. This project seeks to evaluate that tool and make improvements based on that evaluation.

The 2007-2008 project was justified in part by data from employer surveys showing that ERAU students needed to strengthen their writing skills. More recent employer survey data indicate that this need is still present and, in fact, is greater than before.

- Only **67.6%** of employers rated ERAU **2004** graduates' technical writing competence as good or excellent. Compare that to the results for the Class of **2003**, in which **85.7%** of employers thought graduates' technical writing competence was good or excellent.
- Only **66%** of employers rated ERAU **2004** graduates' general non-technical writing skills as good or excellent. Compare that to the results for the class of **2003**, in which **80%** of employers rated graduates' skills as good or excellent.

This project also aligns with a specific goal and strategy of the Department of Arts & Sciences. The Department's vision statement reads in part that the goal of the department is to ensure competency in "logical and probabilistic thinking, critical thinking, clear and substantive writing." To that end, the department has pledged to work with "our 'internal'" customers to ensure we are providing students with requisite skill sets in mathematics, English composition, critical thinking, etc. to ensure the students are prepared to be successful in the upper level courses."

Finally, this project aligns with a stated goal of the University's General Education Program, to enable students to "gain and enhance competence in written and oral communication" (ERAU catalog, p. 24).

#### Criteria for determining success:

Success could be indicated in several ways:

- A very high percentage (over 90%) of instructors are using the writing rubric as is and are fully satisfied with it (an ideal outcome!)
- Data clearly show which areas of the rubric are most difficult to use and/or are not widely used
- Improvements are made to one or more of these areas by the brainstorming group

#### Assessment instrument:

A survey will be developed using Survey Monkey. Possible questions might include:

- Did you use the ERAU Writing Rubric in your class just completed?
- If you did not use the rubric, which of the following reasons best indicates why? (Answers could include:
  - I thought it was too hard to understand.
  - I thought it would take too much time.
  - I have my own rubric.
  - I don't believe in rubrics.
  - It didn't seem relevant to my assignments.
  - Students didn't understand it.)
- If you used the rubric, what percentage of your assignments did you grade with it?
- If you used the rubric but not for every assignment, which of the following reasons best indicates why? (Answers could include:
  - It was not relevant to some assignments because they were short, informal, ungraded, not in essay form, or for some other reason.
  - It was too much work to use for every assignment.)
- If you used the rubric, which parts did you find most difficult to use?
- Of the parts that you found difficult to use, which of the following reasons best indicates why? (Answers to this one might include some of those already stated above.)
- If you used the rubric, which parts did you find easiest or most helpful to use?
- Of the parts that you found easiest or most helpful, which of the following reasons best indicates why? (Answers might include:
  - I understood it clearly.
  - It was easy to apply to my assignment requirements.
  - It provided concrete numbers, such as 2 errors or 4-6 errors, that made it easy to calculate the points I should give.)
- Do you have any other comments or feedback on the rubric?

The survey instrument will also include demographic questions to try to ensure participation across all disciplines, geographic areas, and online. An option will be provided for the survey respondent to include contact information if he or she is willing to be contacted for further information. This follow-up survey might include questions such as:

- What, in your opinion, would be the best way to improve the rubric (or any particular section of it)?
- Is there some aspect of good writing that is not covered in the rubric and should be?

The follow-up survey could also give respondents the opportunity to explain their answers to selected questions. For example:

- If you answered negatively to one of the questions on the initial survey, please expand on your reasons.
- If you answered positively to one of the questions on the initial survey, please expand on your reasons.

#### Responsible person for collecting assessment data:

Dr. Terri Maue will collect assessment data.

Dr. Joe Allen will assist with the statistical analysis.

#### How data will be used for continuous program improvement:

This project could be carried out, on perhaps a less comprehensive basis, annually, until the rubric has reached a high enough level of usage and acceptance. Once that has occurred, another assessment could be made of grading consistency and perhaps even a long-term comparison of students' writing, based on already archived examples, could be undertaken, with the goal of actually demonstrating how the rubric contributed to improvement.

Another possible outcome is that this rubric could be used as a basis for other rubrics, thus furthering the goal of providing practical tools for assessment and improvement.