Norming Session for English 200+ Courses

Date: August 23, 2013
Time: 1:00-1:45 PM
Attending: Charlene Gima, Melissa Holroyd-Hatch, Brenda Kwon, Conred Maddox, Derek Otsuji, Bed Paudyal, Eric Paul Shaffer, Jeff Stearns
Recorder: Eric Paul Shaffer

The meeting was convened in order to allow instructors of 200+ courses in the Language Arts Division to meet and discuss what aspects of our courses are part of the regular assessment process.

The discussion began with a pooling of the parts and features of writing and our courses that we each assess. In an extensive exchange, instructors developed a list of items that we all assess and then categorized them into three general categories.

The first category is organization. As part of that, instructors cited a need to assess the quality and validity of reasons and evidence, the effective use of logic, a demonstrated and accurate employment of textual citation and bibliographical documentation, clarity, unity or focus, and effective and consistent use of thesis statements and essay organization.

The second category is critical thinking. All instructors recognize and emphasize that a 200+ course focus on further perfecting writing skills and producing larger and more detailed pieces of writing. In fact, all 200+ courses at Honolulu Community College are writing-intensive courses which require a total word count of 4000+ words for the semester, and since 200+ courses are often required of students who will go on to further degrees, the level of competence in writing must be assessed thoroughly and in many ways. Critical thinking is an essential skill for all students, and particularly for the students who will continue in the education. Depending on the course content, as part of critical thinking, instructors focus on the quality of literary, textual, and case study analysis; recognizing the uses of and the application of rhetorical devices in writing; analysis of audience from the perspectives of the reader and the writer; and understanding the purposes of the writer concerning the work and the composition of the work.

The third category is style. All instructors assess the clarity of student analysis, writing, and thinking within the course. Instructors also assess the accuracy of student analysis of a writer’s style and then the application of lessons learned from that analysis as applied in future student writing. As elements of style within the work and student writing, the acquisition, application, and understanding of the vocabulary of critical analysis, literary terminology, and grammar terminology as well as the language of the works studied is assessed.
The next half of the meeting was devoted to discussing how much weight each of these categories have in the grading process. Instructors reached a consensus that each category gets equal or relatively equal representation in grading, and all categories carry significant weight in the grade as a whole.

For the coming semesters in the new academic year, instructors were encouraged to review these categories as their courses progressed so that in future meetings, our observations might generate further discussion. The meeting adjourned at 1:45PM.