

Background: This is the first assessment project conducted in the Reading and Writing Center that attempts to analyze the impact of writing consultation on student paper revisions. This project focuses on the first of three research papers assigned in Humanities 2LS, a course in ethical inquiry that is required for the LMC Associate's Degree. In the year preceding this project, the Director of the Reading and Writing Center worked with instructors teaching Humanities 2LS to revise the requirements for the research paper and the accompanying student handbook.

Research Question: Do HUM 2LS students revise their papers based on advice received from the writing consultant? If students follow the advice of the writing consultant, to what degree is the paper modified?

Sampling Design: Two HUM 2LS instructors volunteered to participate in this pilot. All students in these two sections of HUM 2LS who turned in the first research paper and who met with a writing consultant were included in the sample, with the exception of three students who came to the consultation without a first draft and one student who was suspected of plagiarism. With these omissions, the sample contained 29 students.

Method of assessment: At the end of the consultation, the writing consultant completed a form that identified parts of the assignment that the student needed to revise. Students were given a copy of the completed form as a record of the consultant's advice. The first draft was copied and filed in the Reading and Writing Center. Instructors submitted copies of the graded papers to the Reading and Writing Center for assessment. Each graded paper was paired with the corresponding first draft. Consultants compared the first draft to the graded version and assessed whether the student's revisions "matched" the advice from the consulting session as recorded on the form and the "degree" to which the paper was revised.

Scoring Technique: The Director of the Reading and Writing Center conducted a benchmarking exercise in which each consultant assessed the same paired-paper. Scores on both measures, "match" and "degree", were discussed and consensus reached. Then each paired-paper was assessed independently by two writing consultants. If scores on either measure ("match" or "degree") differed by more than plus or minus one, the paper was assessed independently by a third reader. The two closest scores were averaged. Eight consultants participated in the assessment of papers.

Results:

Paper	Match			Degree			Grade	Comments
1	4	5	4.5	2	3	2.5	A	
2	4	4	4	2	3	2.5	A	
3	2		XX	1		XX	D+	No first draft.
4	2	2	2	1	1	1	F+	
5	2	1	1.5	1	1	1	B	
6	2	2	2	1	1	1	C	
7	3	3	3	2	2	2	F	
8	1.5	2	1.75	1	2	1.5	C	
9	2	3	2.5	1	1	1	F+	
10	4	5	4.5	3	3	3	D+	
11	2	3	2.5	1.5	1	1.25	C	
12	4	5	4.5	2	3	2.5	B	
13	1.5	1	1.25	1	0	0.5	F+	
14	4	3	3.5	3	2	2.5	B	
15	4	1	3.5	2	0	2	C+	Third reader match = 3; degree = 2
16	3	3	3	2	3	2.5	C+	
17	4	4	4	2	3	2.5	B	
18	2	1	1.5	1	1	1	F+	
19	5	4	4.5	3	3	3	C+	
20	5	4	4.5	3	2	2.5	A	
21	4	4	4	3	3	3	A	
22	2	3	2.5	1	2	1.5	B+	
23	2	2	2	2	2	2	C	
24	5	3	4.5	3	2	2.5	A	3 rd reader match = 4
25	3	3	3	2	2	2	C	
26	5	5	5	3	3	3	A	
27	5	1	4.5	3	0	3	B+	3 rd reader
28	2	3	2.5	2	2	5	C	
29	1	n/a	XX	1	N/A	XX	NONE	Teacher did not believe that student wrote it.
30	1	3	XX	1	3	XX	D	3 rd reader 1 st draft was only paragraph; insufficient to make judgment about revision
31	3	5	4.5	2	3	2.5	B	3 rd reader match = 4
32	1	N/A	XX	1	N/A	XX	D	No first draft.
33	4	3	3.5	3	2	2.5	C	

Analysis:

Do HUM 2LS students revise their papers based on advice received from the writing consultant? Yes, 62% of the students revised their papers based on consultant's advice.

	Mean "match" score		
	1-2.5	3-3.5	4-5
Number of students	11	6	12
Percent of students	11/29 = 38%	6/29 = 21%	12/29 = 41%

If students follow the advice of the writing consultant, to what degree is the paper modified? Of the 18 students who revised their papers based on consultant's advice (mean "match" score 3-5), 100% of the revisions were significant (mean "degree" score 2-3).

Is there a relationship between the student's use of consultant's advice in revision and grade on the paper? Yes, 92% of the students who followed the consultants' advice (match score of 4-5) made a passing grade on the paper; all of the students making an A had a match score of 4-5, while 80% of the students who made a D or an F on the paper did not follow the consultants' advice (match score of 1-2).

Note: The following analysis makes use of the grade the instructor gave the paper. Since instructors may use different grading criteria, this is an **indirect** measure of the effectiveness of the writing consultation.

Table of counts

"match" category	A	B	C	D	F	total
4-5	6	4	1	1	0	12
3-3.5	0	1	4	0	1	16
1-2.5	0	2	5	0	4	11
total	6	7	10	1	5	29

The following table gives the percent of students in each "match" category that received a given grade.

"match" category	A	B	C	D	F	# in each "match" category
4-5	6/12=50%	4/12=33%	1/12=8%	1/12=8%	0/12=0%	12
3-3.5	0	1/6=17%	4/6=67%	0/6=0%	1/16=17%	16
1-2.5	0	2/11=18%	5/11=45%	0/11=0%	4/11=36%	11
# with grade	6	7	10	1	5	

Observations based on this table:

- 92% of the students with a "match" score of 4-5, made an A, B, or C on the paper
- 83% of the students with a "match" score of 3-3.5, made a B or C on the paper
- 63% of the students with a "match" score of 1-2.5, made a B or C on the paper

The following table gives the percent of students in each grade category that received a given "match" score.

"match" category	A	B	C	D	F	# in each "match" category
4-5	6/6=100%	4/7=57%	1/10=10%	1/1=100%	0	12
3-3.5	0	1/7=14%	4/10=40%	0	1/5=20%	16
1-2.5	0	2/11=29%	5/10=50%	0	4/5=80%	11
# with grade	6	7	10	1	5	

Observations based on this table:

- All of the A papers scored 4-5 on "match"
- 71% of the B papers scored 3-5 on "match"
- 50% of the C papers scored 3-5 on "match"
- 20% of the F papers scored 3-3.5 on "match", with 80% scoring 1-2.5

Other observations by Nancy and Myra:

1. Given that only five papers had to be read a 3rd time, the norming session was successful. However, the 3rd readers noticed that some readers considered advice written on the student paper in addition to information communicated on the form when determining “match” score; other readers ignored advice written on paper and only focused on the form. This needs to be clarified during the norming session next time.
2. As 3rd readers, we noticed that, in the 5 papers we read, students tended to revise their papers based on the feedback written on the paper itself, while largely ignoring the advice given on the form. Why? Is this because the advice written on the paper tends to be more specific and thus easier to address, while the form gives global advice that is more difficult to address? OR are students just paying more attention to what is actually written on their paper? OR did consultants forget to give students a copy of the completed form?
3. In the comments section, the readers tended to write justifications for their scores. This information may have been time-consuming to produce and did not yield useful information for improving the writing-consulting process. Perhaps the purpose of the “comments” section should be discussed during the norming session.
4. Do not include students who do not have a first draft during the consultation in the sample.
5. Further clarify the consultant’s form to make sure that all consultants understand the meaning of a check mark: e.g. student needs to work on defining key concepts.

Other questions Myra and Nancy have:

1. What explains the correlation between making an F and not following consultant’s advice? (80% of the students who made F’s on their papers were rated as 1-2 on “match”) What hypotheses do the consultants have about this correlation? For example, one hypothesis is that the consultant’s advice on a poor first draft will probably be large “global” issues that are difficult for a student to address. If this is the case, what do we need to learn about the revision process to help these students?
2. In our observations, it was rare for a student to make major revisions. For example, we did not see major reorganization of arguments laid out in 1st draft or even significant restructuring within paragraphs. Students tended to add a few sentences here and there but did not tend to delete or rework what they had written in their 1st draft. Do consultants think this observation rings true? If so, is there more to the revision process that should be part of the consultation?

Action Plan:

Results were reviewed and discussed during one of the writing consultants' monthly training sessions in SP 05. Action plans will be developed in consultation with the consultants and implemented by the Director of the Reading and Writing Center.