

PURDUE WRITING LAB REPORT

1979 - 1980



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SUMMARY

In the 1979-1980 academic year, the English Department's Writing Lab continued to offer students individualized supplementary instruction designed to help them improve their writing skills. A total of 4763 students were assisted in tutorial appointments, on an immediate drop-in basis, in mini-courses, in classrooms visited by the lab's Traveling Teacher program, and through the use of self-instruction materials available in the lab. With expanded facilities and new materials and services developed by the lab staff, the Writing Lab was able to offer specialized assistance to a variety of students beyond freshman composition, including Business Writing students in English 420, students writing job or graduate school applications and resumes, graduate students studying for the Graduate English Proficiency Exam, foreign students enrolled in English-as-a-Second-Language courses, English and English education majors who requested additional work on writing skills, and English majors who wanted a practicum in tutoring and materials development.

For teachers of writing, the lab's Resource Collection of instructional materials and its library of books and journals on the teaching of writing were borrowed by the composition staff, its lending library and reference collection were used by students, its audio-visual programs were borrowed for use in composition classrooms, and its facilities and materials were made available to faculty members at other colleges or universities where writing labs are being started or expanded. In addition, outside grants have been obtained to develop materials for engineering students using the lab, and members of the Writing Lab staff have presented papers, given workshops, and published articles about their contributions to the lab's services. Finally, several research projects undertaken in the lab have indicated its rich potential as a facility for further research.

Questionnaires aimed at evaluating the progress made by students who attended the lab were sent out to the students and to their composition instructors. The

responses to these questionnaires indicated that the tutorial instruction being offered by the lab greatly increased the writing competence, grades, motivation, and self-confidence of the students who attended the lab.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall and spring semesters of the academic year 1979-1980 the English Department's Writing Lab continued to serve as a supplement to the department's composition program, as a writing skills tutorial center for other students in the university, and as a resource facility for the composition staff. In order to truly individualize, the Writing Lab continued to offer a variety of instructional approaches and services (described in Sections A-1 and A-2) and has also greatly expanded its work by adding new programs, services, and projects (described in Section A-3). As has been frequently noted in recent journal articles and conference papers, hundreds of writing labs are becoming the flexible arm of writing programs and providing instruction beyond the composition classroom at institutions which are committed to strengthening the writing skills of all their students. Like other writing centers, the Purdue Writing Lab has recently expanded in a number of directions and will continue to seek new ways to provide instruction in writing to students, resources on the teaching of writing to instructors, and facilities for study and research on writing and writing instruction.

A. WRITING LAB INSTRUCTION AND SERVICES

1. Instruction in Writing Skills

a. Tutorial appointments

Students who needed a series of meetings with a lab instructor in order to work through a program of study in one or more areas were encouraged to sign up for regularly scheduled appointments. While the great majority of students who attended tutorial sessions received the help they needed within one to four sessions (see Table 2, page 8), some students attended regular weekly tutorials for most or all of the semester. During the year, 544 students attended 1055 half-hour sessions, approximately 60% of the available

hours of instruction. The remainder of the lab staff's time was spent with drop-in students, with mini-courses, and with Traveling Teacher sessions in classrooms.

b. Drop-in help

Because the Writing Lab instructors should also be available to students who need immediate help or have a quick question, the staff scheduled part of their time as drop-in hours. During this time lab instructors were available to answer questions, help a student with pre-writing discussion for a paper, discuss organizational structures for papers in progress, help students learn to proofread their themes, and discuss the progress of a paper begun in a tutorial session on a previous day. This service has proved to be extremely popular and as indicated in Table 3 page 9, 811 students used the drop-in hours provided. When students' writing indicated that they needed more extensive help, they were encouraged to make appointments for tutorial instruction.

c. Mini-courses and the Traveling Teacher program

As in previous years, the Writing Lab again held mini-courses, intended as small group instruction or review of the subject. Because of the past success of these mini-courses, the program was extended this year to include a total of 21 different mini-courses offered to 562 students in 46 separate sessions in the fall semester. In the spring semester, 22 different mini-courses, held in 46 separate sessions, were attended by 308 students.

In addition to the regular mini-courses scheduled primarily to fit the needs of students in freshman composition courses, the lab offered other mini-courses intended to provide assistance to more advanced students with more specialized needs. The Business Writing

lab instructor offered mini-courses on resumes, letters of application, and revision for business writing, sessions which were useful for English 420 (Business Writing) students as well as for other students at the university writing letters to seek employment or entrance to graduate schools. Other mini-courses helped pre-law students review grammar and usage for the Law School Aptitude Test (LSAT) and the Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT), and another mini-course was offered to graduate students preparing for the Graduate English Proficiency Exam in the Office of Writing Review. An additional mini-course on writing essay exams was structured to offer assistance to students in other fields of study. Announcements sent to faculty members in other departments inviting their students to attend produced a favorable response, particularly from faculty in history, political science, and psychology.

Finally, for composition instructors who wanted mini-courses taught in their classroom, the Traveling Teacher program was again available this year and proved to be extremely popular. Over forty hours of classroom instruction were offered to 939 students in composition courses through this service. The exchange of ideas and teaching techniques between the classroom instructor and the Writing Lab instructor was equally useful.

d. Self-instruction

Because of the addition of six study carrels and tape recorders in the fall semester, the Writing Lab's extensive set of tape and booklet self-instruction modules on spelling, grammar, rhetoric, and vocabulary were heavily used this year. As indicated in Table 5, p. 10, 719 students came in for 1483 hours of independent study, a service particularly appreciated by the many foreign students

who need intensive study to improve their command of English.

The recent acquisition of new self-instruction modules on business writing will also serve as a resource and a supplement to the Business Writing course work and to Management students writing course reports.

2. Resource Center

a. For instructors

The Writing Lab's Resource File of materials on the teaching of composition continued to be used frequently this year. Instructors came in to dip into files of theme assignments; browse through folders of sample graded papers; read articles on composition in recent issues of the major college composition journals to which the lab subscribes; borrow books on the practice, theory, and pedagogy of composition instruction; make copies of the lab's instructional materials; choose diagnostic tests; and sign out audio-visual programs for classroom use.

b. For students

The Writing Lab now has an active lending library of grammar handbooks, rhetorics, and workbooks for freshmen who wish to supplement their reading in their assigned textbooks and for graduate students in need of books to help review for the Graduate English Proficiency Exam. In addition, the lab has expanded its collection of reference books and style sheets for various academic disciplines. Of particular use to students writing job applications and to students in English 420 is the resource collection of sample letters, reports, memos, etc. and additional texts compiled by the lab instructor for the Business Writing program. Several hundred students have also found the lab to a useful "writing place" where they can do

their own writing, use lab resources, and seek assistance if needed.

c. For other institutions

Purdue's Writing Lab continued to serve as a clearinghouse for information on labs and as a model for writing labs across the country. Phone and letter requests have been answered with copies of the lab's instructional materials, record keeping forms, descriptive booklets and semester reports; and on-site visitors were given tours of the lab's facilities. In addition, the lab staff was invited to present workshops at the Indianapolis Teacher Center and at Wainwright Junior High School in Lafayette. In the Document Design Project's report Teaching College Students How to Write, an N.I.E. funded report on the state of composition programs across the nation, one-third of the section on writing labs is devoted to a description of the Purdue Writing Lab, noting in particular its work with students beyond the entering freshmen and its extensive program of mini-courses.

Of the Writing Lab staff, the director edits the Writing Lab Newsletter, published by the English Department and sent to over 750 labs and learning centers across the country; and several staff members have presented papers at conferences describing various aspects of the Writing Lab's work. In particular the new lab component of the Business Writing Program has been the subject of a presentation at the 1980 Midwest Regional Conference of the ABCA, some expanded uses of the lab were discussed in another paper presented at the Second Annual Writing Centers Association conference, and an article by an undergraduate English education major about her particular program of independent study in the lab appeared in

the April 1980 issue of the Writing Lab Newsletter.

3. New Programs and Services

In the last year, because of the addition of two more staff members and the increased facilities for self-instruction, the lab has been able to increase the number of students it serves, from 2990 students in 1978-79 to 4763 students in 1979-80, and to increase the total number of hours of instruction offered, from 2483 hours in 1978-79 to 4905 hours in 1979-80. In addition, the lab has been able to assist new groups of students with particular writing needs beyond that of freshman composition. Most notable has been the addition of a lab tutor for the Business Writing program who has developed an extensive collection of instructional handouts and exercises, a referral system, a resource collection of books and sample forms of business communication, and mini-courses of special interest to business writing classes. All of this was also available to other students at the university who are writing applications and resumes, resulting not only in a very large increase in the number of English 420 students coming to the lab but also an increase in the number of undergraduates coming for self-help.

Another group served more extensively by the Writing Lab this year were graduate students in need of instruction to complete requirements for the Graduate English Proficiency Exam. The number of such graduate students working in the Writing Lab, attending mini-courses, or checking out books and materials rose from 64 in 1978-79 to 176 in 1979-80. Engineering students enrolled in English 003, a self-paced course, have begun to use the lab, and two grants of \$3000 each have been awarded by Continental Oil Company to the director to develop self-instruction materials for these students. Other engineering students in a 500-level

nuclear engineering seminar were required by their instructor to work with lab instructors in the preparation of final reports for the course. In an agricultural economics course, students whose reports received an unsatisfactory grade from the Office of Writing Review were expected to seek help from the Writing Lab in revising their reports. Offering instruction in writing to students in other fields of study, usually described as the "writing across the curriculum" movement has become a major concern at many universities, and it is hoped that Purdue's Writing Lab will continue to expand its work in this area.

Another new service, a 500-level independent studies course, has been offered in response to requests from students, particularly advanced undergraduate English and English education majors who want extensive reviews of grammar, practice in sentence combining, and programs of self-instruction. The lab has also offered practicum credit for students who want experience in tutoring and materials development. As part of these or other courses, small-scale research projects have also been conducted, and the potential for further research projects is excellent.

B. STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF THE USE OF THE WRITING LAB

Table 1. Total number of students using the Writing Lab during the Fall 1979 and Spring 1980 semesters

1. No. of students attending the lab for tutorial appointments:	544
2. No. of students using the lab's drop-in service:	811
3. No. of students using self-instruction modules:	719
4. No. of students attending small group sessions:	45
5. No. of students attending mini-courses:	870
6. No. of students taught by the lab's Traveling Teacher Program:	939
7. No. of students using lab resources (handouts, etc.):	467
8. No. of instructors using lab resources:	75
9. No. of students writing in the lab and using reference materials:	<u>293</u>
TOTALS	<u><u>4763</u></u>

Table 2. No. of appointments for regularly scheduled tutorial sessions

<u>No. of appts. per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of appts.</u>
1	187	187
2	127	254
3	98	294
4	46	184
5	222	110
6	21	126
7	10	70
8	8	64
9	9	81
10	4	40
11	1	11
12	1	12

<u>No. of appts. per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of appts.</u>
13	4	52
15	1	15
16	1	16
17	2	34
21	1	21
28	1	<u>28</u>
TOTAL NO. OF APPTS.		<u>1599</u>

Table 3. No. of drop-in sessions
attended by students

<u>No. of sessions per student</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of sessions</u>
1	573	573
2	131	262
3	47	141
4	24	96
5	20	100
6	7	42
7	6	42
8	2	16
9	1	<u>9</u>
TOTAL NO. OF SESSIONS		<u>1281</u>

Table 4. No. of small group sessions

<u>No. of sessions</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Total no. of sessions</u>
1	1	1
4	2	8
5	2	10
6	2	18
7	6	42
8	7	56
9	5	45
10	8	80
11	5	55
12	6	<u>72</u>
TOTAL NO.		<u>387</u>

Table 5. No. of self-instruction modules used

<u>No. of modules</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>No. of uses of modules</u>
1	448	448
2	125	250
3	47	141
4	45	180
5	13	65
6	10	60
7	5	35
8	4	32
9	3	27
10	3	30
11	5	55
12	3	36
13	2	26
14	4	56
20	1	20
22	1	22
	TOTAL NO. OF USES OF MODULES	<u>1483</u>

Table 6. No. of requests by students for handouts and other instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	414	414
2	41	82
3	4	12
4	7	28
5	1	5
	TOTAL NO. OF REQUESTS	<u>541</u>

Table 7. No. of requests by composition teachers for instructional materials

<u>No. of requests</u>	<u>No. of instructors</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	40	40
2	14	28
3	12	36
4	4	16
5	3	15

8	1	8
9	1	<u>9</u>
TOTAL NO. OF REQUESTS		<u>152</u>

Table 8. No. of uses of the lab by students as a writing room

<u>No. of uses</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1	211	211
2	44	88
3	17	51
4	8	32
5	3	15
6	4	24
7	2	14
8	1	8
9	2	18
12	1	<u>12</u>
TOTAL NO. OF USES		<u>473</u>

Table 9. Description by courses and services of students using the Writing Lab

A.	COURSE NO. COMPOSITION COURSES	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*	G*	H*	I*	J*
	001	4	1				11		1	3	20
	002	8	7		1		33	13	4	9	75
	003	8	12				7	2			29
	100	11	12		53		56	23	20	5	180
	101	137	264		362	279	276	99	17	55	1489
	101G		2				4	15	3	3	27
12	101I	29	13		4		29	8	1	15	99
	101M	49	40	45	9	84	62	11		13	313
	101X	1	4			23	1			2	31
	102	71	79		57	308	35	31	12	25	618
	102G	1	12		8	134	18	8		3	184
	102I	5	5				12	19	1	2	44
	102M	29	29		5			12		13	88
	102X	2	6				11	11		1	31
	103	6	3		3	23	3	2	1	9	49
	420	40	107		148	74	10	22	8	18	427

	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*	G*	H*	I*	J*
B. OTHERS										
1) undergrads										
a. self help	19	55		84		62	53		85	358
b. for courses	53	55		10	14	39	32	4	14	221
c. LSAT prep.		8		57		1	4			70
d. GMAT prep.	4	2		49		3	2			60
e. resumes, letters of application	15	39					14		3	71
2) grad students										
a. self help	17	23		15		7	2	1	11	76
b. English proficiency exam	29	29		45		16	54		3	176
TOTALS	544	811	45	870	939	719	467	75	293	4763

13

- *A. No. attending tutorial appointments
- *B. No. requesting drop-in help
- *C. No. attending small group sessions
- *D. No. attending mini-courses
- *E. No. attending traveling teacher sessions
- *F. No. using self-instruction modules
- *G. No. of students requesting handouts
- *H. No. of instructors using resources
- *I. No. of students using the lab as a writing room
- *J. TOTALS

Table 10. Description by school of students attending the lab

<u>School</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Agriculture	14%
CFS	6%
Engineering	17%
HSSE	18%
Management	16%
Pharmacy	2%
Science	12%
Technology	8%
Veterinary Medicine	1%
Other (including staff and unclassified students)	6%

C. EVALUATIONS

On the following pages the total number of responses are indicated for each item on all the evaluation questionnaires sent out by the Writing Lab. The first questionnaire asks for evaluations from composition instructors of the lab's services. The next questionnaire asks for composition instructors' evaluations of their students' progress because of their lab work, and the next two questionnaires ask students who attended the lab both for regular tutorial appointments and for drop-in instruction to evaluate the quality of their lab instruction and also their improvement in writing skills. The last questionnaire asks students to evaluate the self-instruction modules they studied in the Writing Lab.



TO: The Composition Staff

If you can spare a few minutes, we can continue to help your students! In order to justify our existence and to maintain our operation (and our budget), we in the Writing Lab must have some evaluation of our performance. Frankly, we're also curious to know if our instruction has been effective. Thus, for all these reasons, we urge you to do the following:

1. FILL OUT THE SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS SHEET. If you haven't made use of these other services, would you please indicate on the back of the sheet why you haven't done so.
2. FILL OUT THE ATTACHED INSTRUCTOR'S SHEETS. Please return them to the box in the main office by the end of finals week.
3. PASS OUT TO THE STUDENTS THEIR EVALUATION SHEETS. If you would please give these same students who attended the lab a few minutes before or after class to fill out their forms, you can then collect their sheets and return them with yours. Students can also opt to return the forms to the lab themselves, but the return rate will undoubtedly be lower that way.

Thanks,

The Writing Lab staff

1. Resource File: The materials on composition available in the Writing Lab's Resource File, for use by the composition staff, are

1	2	⑬ 3	⑳ 4	㉑ 5
of little help		of some help		of great help

2. Self-Instruction Materials: The self-instruction tape and booklet modules available in the lab for immediate use by all students are

1	2	⑰ 3	㉑ 4	㉒ 5
of little help		of some help		of great help

3. Mini-Courses: The mini-courses offered this semester were generally

1	④ 2	⑨ 3	㉔ 4	㉓ 5
of little help		of some help		of great help

4. Drop-in Help: The drop-in help offered this semester was generally

1	2	(13) 3	(29) 4	(36) 5
of little help		of some help		of great help

5. Traveling Teachers: The traveling teacher sessions offered this semester were generally

(2) 1	(1) 2	(1) 3	(10) 4	(14) 5
of little help		of some help		of great help

6. Do you have any suggestions, complaints, or comments about the Writing Lab? Any additional services that we can add? Any suggestions for more materials for the Resource File?

TO: _____, Composition instructor

FROM: _____, Writing Lab instructor

_____, a student in your composition course,
has been working in the Writing Lab on the following units of instruction:

No. of appointments: _____

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Writing Lab's tutorial instruction, we would very much appreciate your answers to the following questions. Please circle the appropriate numbers unless you feel that they don't apply, and return this sheet to the box in the main office by the last day of classes this semester.

1. EXTENT OF HELP NEEDED: This student needed

(3) ————— (7) ————— (71) ————— (59) ————— (101)
 1 2 3 4 5
 very little help some help a great deal of help

2. SUBJECT MASTERY: For the above listed units of GRAMMAR, this student now generally demonstrates

(5) ————— (15) ————— (103) ————— (76) ————— (34)
 1 2 3 4 5
 no improvement some improvement great improvement

3. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: During the course of the semester, this student's grades

(16) ————— (23) ————— (96) ————— (48) ————— (57)
 1 2 3 4 5
 dropped or did not change rose one letter grade rose at least two letter grades

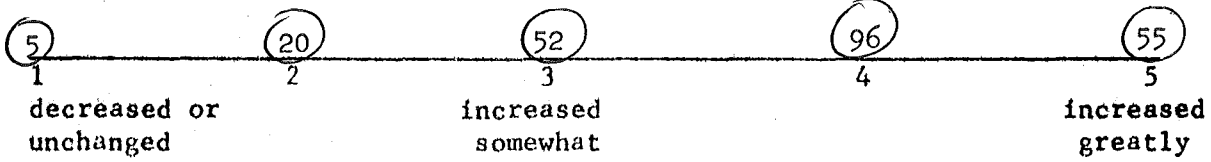
4. STUDENT'S ATTITUDE: While attending the lab, this student expressed the following feeling toward the lab

(4) ————— (9) ————— (66) ————— (100) ————— (61)
 1 2 3 4 5
 resentment no feeling expressed a great deal of appreciation

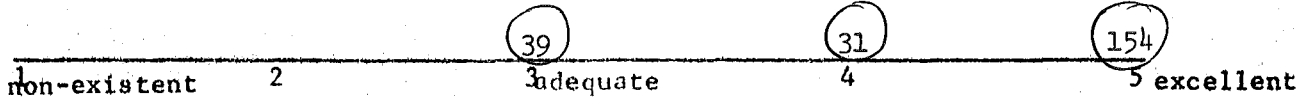
5. SELF IMAGE: This student's sense of self confidence in himself and his abilities seems to show

(2) ————— (10) ————— (45) ————— (119) ————— (63)
 1 2 3 4 5
 decreased self confidence no change definite improvement

6. MOTIVATION: This student's desire to write well seems



7. FEEDBACK FROM THE LAB: While this student was attending the lab, communication from his lab instructor was



Other comments and suggestions:





student's name: _____
lab instructor: _____

Student Evaluation of the Writing Lab

HELP! THE WRITING LAB NEEDS FEEDBACK FROM YOU. Would you please fill out this form by circling the appropriate number for each question. If you take a minute before or after class to do this, you can return this sheet to your instructor. If you prefer, instead, to return this sheet yourself, you can drop it in the box at the receptionist's desk in the lab (226 Heavilon Hall) before the end of the semester.

Once again, we urge you to fill out this sheet, and we thank you for your help. Also, please remember to drop in again whenever you want additional help with your writing (job applications, reports, etc.).

1. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION: Do you feel that the materials and instruction you received in the lab were appropriate, clear, and effectively presented?

1 2 3 4 5

not clear and ineffective adequate very clear and very effective

2. WRITING PROGRESS: Do you feel that you made genuine progress in your writing as a result of your lab work?

1 2 3 4 5

no progress some progress great deal of progress

3. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: Do you feel that what you learned in the Writing Lab enabled you to write better papers in your composition class and therefore receive better grades?

1 2 3 4 5

grades dropped or did not change rose one letter grade rose at least two letter grades

4. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTOR: Do you feel that the instructor you worked with in the Writing Lab was genuinely helpful and competent?

1 2 3 4 5

incompetent adequate very helpful and very competent

Other comments and suggestions:



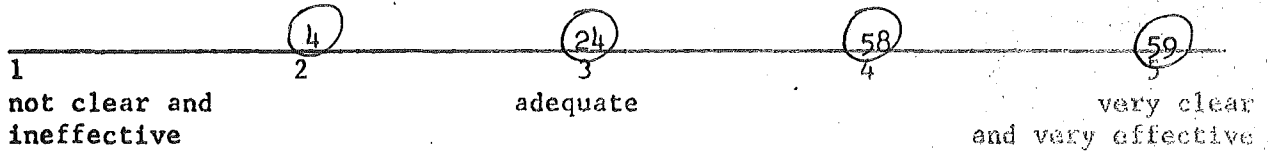
Drop-In help

Student Evaluation of the Writing Lab

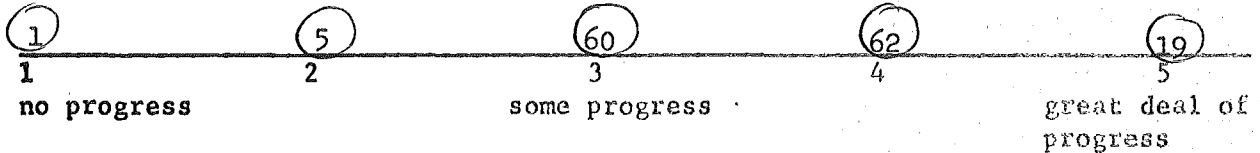
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Once again, we urge you to fill out this sheet, and we thank you for your help. Also, please remember to drop in again whenever you want additional help with your writing (job applications, reports, etc.).

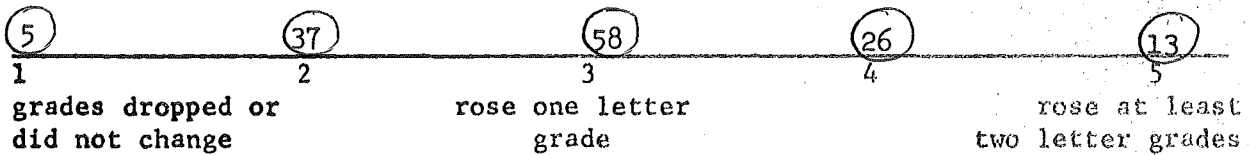
1. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION: Do you feel that the materials and instruction you received in the lab were appropriate, clear, and effectively presented?



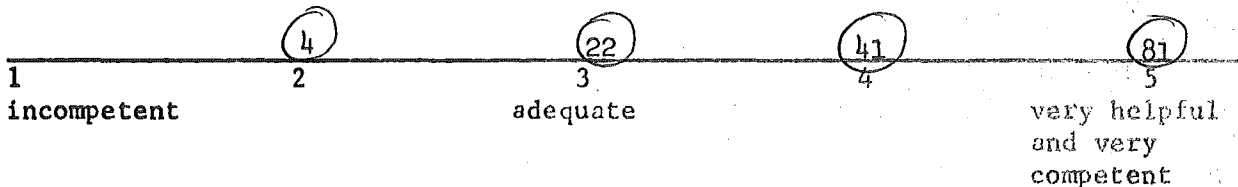
2. WRITING PROGRESS: Do you feel that you made genuine progress in your writing as a result of your lab work?



3. GRADE IMPROVEMENT: Do you feel that what you learned in the Writing Lab enabled you to write better papers in your composition class and therefore receive better grades?



4. QUALITY OF INSTRUCTOR: Do you feel that the instructor you worked with in the Writing Lab was genuinely helpful and competent?



Other comments and suggestions:



Name: _____

Student Evaluation of the Writing Lab's Self-Instruction Materials

The Writing Lab offered you some help this semester when you came in to use our self-instruction materials. Now we, in turn, need your help so that we can evaluate our services and improve upon whatever needs improvement. If you will fill out the brief questionnaire (and return it either to your instructor or to the lab in 226 H.H.), we will study it very carefully. Please use the space on the back to list your complaints (such as delays or confusion at the reception desk, broken tapes, etc), your suggestions (such as requests for more materials, etc.) or possibly even a compliment if you were pleased with any aspect of our services.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

1. Do you generally like or dislike using self-instruction materials? _____ Why? Like -- (233)
Dislike -- (60)

²¹2. Why did you use the self-instruction modules in the Writing Lab? (Check one)
a. My instructor referred me _____
b. My lab instructor suggested it _____
c. I decided to get some self help _____

1. Subject of first module used: _____

2. Subject of second module used: _____

3. This module covered material that: (circle most appropriate number)
(50)
(74)
(190)
(70)
(68)
1 2 3 4 5
I was already I needed I needed a
familiar with some help great deal
with with of help
with

1 2 3 4 5
I was already I needed some I needed a great
familiar with help with deal of help wit

4. I would rate the quality of instruction in this module as

10 1	19 2	111 3	167 4	113 5
not clear + not effective		adequate		very clear + very effective

1	2	3	4	5
not clear + not effective		adequate		very clear + very effective

5. As a result of using this module, I found that my writing showed

17 1	62 2	200 3	109 4	36 5
no improve- ment		some improve- ment		a great deal of improve- ment

1	2	3	4	5
no improve- ment		some improve- ment		a great deal o improvement

6. Any further comments or suggestions you'd like to share with us?