

AQIP Developmental Education/Mandatory Placement Team

Information on MCC's Developmental Writing Program (October 2010)

Please note: Most of the following information is adapted from the "Teaching Developmental Writing at MCC" section of our departmental course packs and the individual course packs for English 095, 098, and 099 (Instructor's Second Editions, 2010). For more in-depth information, please see those course packs.

Topics Included in this Overview:

1. Developmental writing courses offered
2. How developmental writing courses articulate with Freshman Composition (English 101)
3. Placement into writing courses
4. Double-checking student placement
5. Transferring students between entry-level writing courses, including Humanities Division records Winter 2007-Fall 2010
6. Course descriptions, learning outcomes, and descriptions of teaching Methodology/topical outlines
7. Department-wide final assessments
8. Coordination of the Developmental Writing program

Developmental Writing Courses Offered:

English 095, Writing Exploration
English 098, Basic Sentence Skills
English 099, Basic Writing

How the Developmental Writing Courses Articulate with English 101

For both the English 098 and 099 final exams and also the 095 final project, the bottom-line for determining S or U status on that important assessment is whether the student, on the basis of this assignment alone, appears ready to begin the next writing course. If “yes,” the assignment should earn a grade of S. If “no,” it should earn a grade of U.

However, teachers of all three courses look at more than just that assignment’s grade and the other grades from the semester’s work prior to recommending which writing course a student should take next. We fill out a fairly extensive final recommendation form for each student and go over this recommendation in mandatory final conferences during the last week of the semester.

- Our goal is to help the students understand why they are or are not ready to transition into the college-level writing course.

The English 099 final recommendation form is reprinted on the next page. The 095 and 098 forms are similar.

ENGLISH 099 BASIC WRITING SKILLS FINAL RECOMMENDATION FORM**Student's Name:** _____**Instructor's Name:** _____**Section Code** _____ **Semester/Year** _____ **Grade** _____

- You are ready for English 101
- You are not ready for English 101
- % Readiness for college-level writing assignments as demonstrated in your Final Portfolio
- Final Essay Exam grade

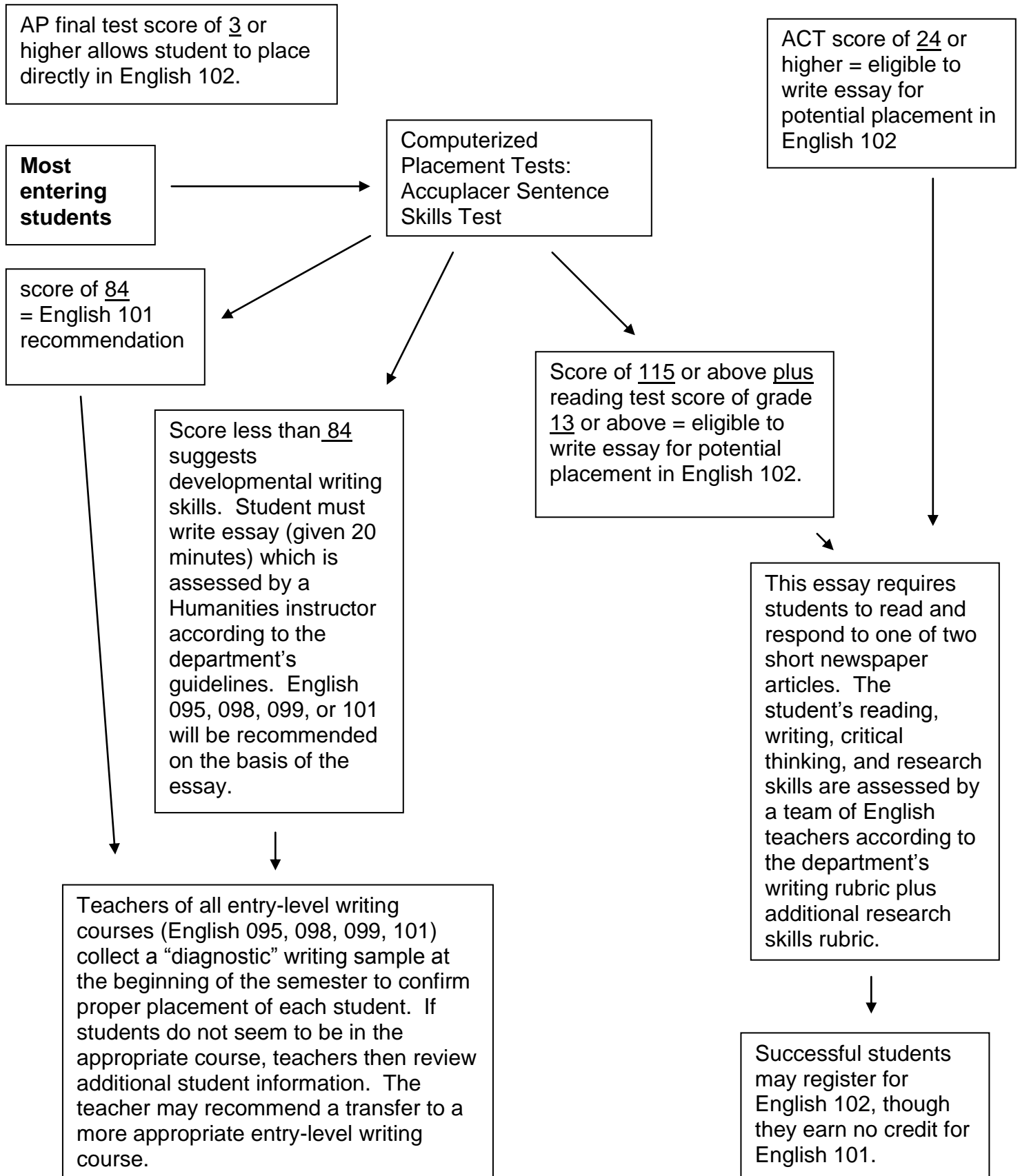
Instructor's comments on your demonstration of college and workplace appropriate behaviors including daily attendance and on-time completion of assignments:

My recommendation is that:

- You should take English 098 because you need to work on sentence writing skills.
- You should repeat English 099 because you need more writing practice.
- You should take English 095 because you need more preparation for developmental writing.
- You should take English as a Second Language, ESL 005 or 006 (English Writing and Grammar).
- You should take Reading Improvement, English 016 or 030.
- You should take CASD 121, Study and Learning Skills or CADS 122, Survival Skills for College.
- You should take COMG 099, Computer Fundamentals, to strengthen your basic computing skills.

These are the basic writing problems you need to work on:

Placement into Writing Courses



Double-Checking Student Placement: Collecting a First-Week Writing Sample and Other Information

To promote student success, all of our English 095, 098, 099, and 101 teachers double-check student placement in their courses.

- All teachers of these entry-level courses have students write a first day or first week “diagnostic” paper so that we may assess student readiness for the course in which they’re registered.
 - As teachers read the writing samples, we are looking for which course the student is ready to BEGIN. For example, for English 101 placement, we are not looking for thesis statements, thoroughly-developed paragraphs, or a particular essay format; this is what we expect to teach in English 101. In addition, we try not to be distracted by occasional spelling errors or somewhat sloppy handwriting as these problems will disappear when the student uses a word processor. Serious spelling problems and obvious difficulty forming letters, however, can indicate developmental skill level.
 - To assist teachers in this “diagnostic” process, the instructor’s edition of the department’s developmental writing course packs include indicators of student readiness for 095, 098, 099, and 101 as well as samples of actual student placement or “diagnostic” writing at each level.
 - Entry-level writing teachers are encouraged (by the Composition and Developmental Writing Coordinators) to look up student reading and writing placement scores through Class Lists on the Secure Log-in and compare their “diagnostic” assessments with the original placement recommendations.
 - Entry-level writing teachers are also encouraged to look up, on the Humanities drive, any record of students’ previous MCC developmental course work to see past grades and teacher recommendations.

- Many teachers also give a first-day questionnaire that asks students about other writing and reading courses they have taken at Mott or another college.

The combination of all this information is invaluable when considering whether the student is ready to succeed in the class in which he or she is enrolled. When we're in doubt about recommending one course over another, we choose the lower course as our goal is to place the student where he or she has the best chance for success.

Transferring Students Between Entry-Level Writing Courses:

Since MCC does not have mandatory placement, we cannot require misplaced students to transfer to other entry-level writing courses. However, if their first-week "diagnostic" writing samples and the other information that we review on students shows that they're unlikely to succeed in the course, we do encourage them to consider moving, and we facilitate that transfer. The Developmental Writing Coordinator and department secretary often play primary roles in assisting the teachers and students through this process.

- Each section of each developmental writing course (095, 098, and 099) has three reserved seats for students who need to transfer in from another writing course. In addition, a few English 101 sections have one seat reserved for transfers.
- If students need to transfer, they must move quickly into the new class before the available seats are taken and before they fall behind in the new course. Transfers should happen during the drop/add window.
- The transfer process is cumbersome but essential in ensuring that students are properly placed into courses where they have the best opportunity to succeed.

- **The transfer process:**

1. Teachers check the original writing course placement recommendation through Class Lists on Secure Log-in.
2. We also look at the original reading placement by grade level. It is common for students in English 095, 098, and 099 to test at grade five through seven reading ability. Their actual reading skill may be even lower as the Accuplacer test does not appear to be accurate at the low end of the spectrum.
 - In general, students who tested at grade five reading are not ready for English 099 and perhaps not 098, either, but the Class List does not show whether the student has taken a reading course and raised his or her skill prior to enrolling in the writing class.
 - Average reading scores for entering students (data from Dr. Richard Tallarigo, several years ago, prior to the existence of English 095):
 - In 098, grade 8
 - In 099, grade 10
 - In 101, grade 11
 - In 102 high grade 11 (almost grade 12).
3. We check the Humanities Records: If the teacher doesn't know whether a student took the originally-recommended writing course or wants more information on the student's success in that course, we need to access the Humanities drive from our office computer (the necessary information is not available online). Once in the Humanities drive, we open the Developmental Writing Program's folder and search for each student's grade and teacher recommendations (see below for sample student record).
4. We help the student through the transfer process: Students need the teacher who is recommending the transfer (or the Developmental Writing Coordinator) to lead them through the process in person. Since teachers can no longer fill out overload forms, which we used to use to transfer students

into the reserved seats (not overloading the classes), the department's secretary now plays an essential role in the transfer process. The secretary temporarily raises the cap on a section and sends an email to the Registrar explaining that a transfer is in process. Only then can the student complete the transfer and go through drop/add in Registration.

- Making sure students get into a section with available seats, but not knowing when students will actually go to Registration to take those seats creates potential for frustration for students, teachers, and staff. The first semester with this new process (Fall 2010) worked well.
- Because the new process is quite time-consuming and confusing, Fall 2010 teachers did not complete the transfer recommendation process unless students had already agreed to make the transfer. There is, therefore, no official record of students declining transfer recommendations for fall 2010.
- In previous years when enrolment was not as high as it is, now, not all writing teachers used the official transfer process. Sometimes, for example, teachers helped students move into the appropriate course through the standard the drop/add process, or teachers talked with students about their recommendation but filled out no paperwork documenting the students' decision to stay in the original course. For these reasons, there is a sketchy overall record of teacher recommendations and student decisions about whether to transfer.
- Humanities Division transfer records exist from Winter 2007 to Fall 2010, only. They reveal that:

Winter 2007: 11 transfers were recommended

- 1 from 101 to 099 (unknown decision)
- 5 from 099 to 098 (all 5 transferred)

- 5 from 098 to 099 (1 transferred)

Spring 2007: 2 transfers were recommended

- 1 from 101 to 099 (unknown decision)
- 1 from 099 to 098 (unknown decision)

Fall 2007: 12 transfers were recommended

- 8 from 101 to 099 (unknown decisions)
- 1 from 099 to 101 (unknown decision)
- 1 from 099 to 098 (transferred)
- 2 from 098 to 099 (both transferred)

Fall 2008: 23 transfers were recommended

- 7 from 101 to 099 (unknown decisions)
- 1 from 101 to 098 (unknown decision)
- 1 from 099 to 101 (unknown decision)
- 7 from 099 to 098 (unknown decisions)
- 3 from 098 to 099 (1 transferred, 2 stayed)
- 4 from 098 to 095 (1 transferred, 3 stayed)

Winter 2009: 23 transfers were recommended

- 3 from 101 to 099 (unknown decisions)
- 1 from 101 to 098 (unknown decision)
- 8 from 099 to 098 (unknown decision)
- 1 from 099 to 095 (unknown decision)
- 3 from 098 to 099 (1 transferred, 1 stayed, 1 unknown decision)
- 6 from 098 to 095 (unknown decisions)
- 1 from 098 to ESL (unknown decision)

Spring 2009: 5 transfers were recommended

- 2 from 101 to 099 (unknown decisions)

- 3 from 101 to 098 (1 stayed, 2 unknown decisions)

Fall 2009: 23 transfers were recommended

- 5 from 101 to 099 (2 dropped 101, 3 transferred)
- 1 from 101 to either 099 or 098 (unknown decision)
- 1 from 099 to 101 (unknown decision)
- 12 from 099 to 098 (1 moved to another 099, 4 stayed, 4 transferred, 3 unknown decisions)
- 3 from 099 to 095 (2 transferred, 1 unknown decision)
- 1 from 098 to 095 (transferred)

Winter 2010: 21 transfers were recommended

- 4 from 101 to 099 (1 transferred, 3 unknown decisions)
- 3 from 101 to 098 (3 unknown decisions)
- 3 from 099 to 101 (1 transferred, 1 stayed, 1 unknown decision)
- 6 from 099 to 098 (3 transferred, 1 stayed, 1 unknown decision)
- 2 from 099 to 095 (both transferred)
- 2 from 098 to 099 (1 transferred, 1 unknown decision)
- 1 from 098 to 095 (stayed)

Spring 2010: 8 transfers were recommended

- 5 from 101 to 099 (unknown decisions)
- 3 from 101 to 098 (unknown decisions)

Fall 2010: 18 transfers were recommended

- 5 from 101 to 099 (all transferred)

- 3 from 099 to 101 (all transferred)
- 7 from 099 to 098 (all transferred)
- 2 from 099 to 095 (both transferred)
- 1 from 098 to 095 (transferred)

Course Descriptions and Learning Outcomes:

English 095, Writing Exploration

Writing Exploration is an intensive writing course that develops students' literacy, employability, and college learning skills. Guest speakers, team projects, and campus exploration will encourage student success as we focus on using writing to learn. This course is designed for students with a reading placement test score between grade five and grade eight, but everyone is welcome. Graded S/U.

By actively participating in the 095 class, students will have the opportunity to:

1. Experience writing as a way to discover and develop their own ideas.
2. Use writing to support their learning about literacy, college learning strategies and employability enhancement.
3. Use a process approach to writing.
4. Develop the clarity of their written communication by learning sentence building and combining skills.
5. Develop oral communication skills.
6. Make the reading/writing/speaking connection.
7. Develop college learning strategies.
8. Explore and learn how to use MCC student-support services.
9. Develop basic academic computing skills.
10. Demonstrate their employability.
11. Develop academic and/or career goals.
12. Explore and analyze literacy requirements of a course in their career path.

13. Develop college and workplace-appropriate teamwork skills.
14. Develop college and workplace-appropriate personal conduct.

Brief Description of Teaching Methodology, English 095

The goal for instruction in 095 is to provide hands-on learning in every session. Mini lessons and practice, rather than lecture, will be used when new skills are introduced and reinforced. Project-based learning will be the backbone of the course.

Group Exploratory Projects:

Much of the hands-on skill-building in English 095 will revolve around two group exploratory projects. These projects will require students to work together to locate information, people, and services on campus prior to oral presentations. Groups will work together to read and understand the materials they've gathered. To prepare for the presentations once they've made the necessary physical visit(s), the groups will need to come to consensus on which information is important to share with their classmates and how to present that information in such a way that each member of the group has an active role. College and workplace appropriate personal conduct will be practiced during the exploratory portion of the projects as well as during the groups' working sessions, which will also provide opportunities to practice teamwork skills.

Guest Teachers:

To add emphasis on primary course objectives other than writing improvement (i.e. college learning skills and employability enhancement) campus experts should be brought in, when possible, to introduce, facilitate, or provide hands-on training in time management and active learning strategies, employability, oral communication, and goal setting. Students will be expected to apply what they learn in those sessions to their on-going coursework.

Materials:

1. Instead of a traditional textbook, students can be given handouts (to supplement the department's course pack) that are designed for developmental readers/writers. All sentence-level exercises should be provided on handouts, on the board, or via the classroom technology. In addition, information should be made available on Blackboard.
2. Students will select a library book to read and report on to the class. To accommodate all reading levels without embarrassing the students, students will choose a book for their own enjoyment or that a child would enjoy.
3. Students will be responsible for providing a three-ring binder, dividers, loose leaf paper, pens and pencils, and a dictionary. Purchase of a flash drive will be strongly recommended.

Computer Lab Use:

At least twice in the semester, instruction and practice will take place in a computer lab. Students will learn very basic academic computing: How to log-on to the MCC system, how to use Blackboard, how to use Web Mail, how to navigate MCC's web site, and how to produce, edit, save, and print a short MS Word document.

Suggested Topical Outline, English 095

Week One-Two:

- Introduction to the course and the role of writing in the course.
- Community-building activities.
- Preliminary assessments.
- Computer lab visit for introduction to basic academic computing: Logging on to MCC's system, Blackboard, MS Word.
- Library visit and book selections.

Week Two-Four:

- Introduction to college learning skills.
- Possible guest teacher on time management skills/active learning strategies (i.e. from the Counseling and Student Development Division).
- First group exploratory project: Student-support services.
- First group oral presentation (on one campus service: What's provided and how to use the service).

Week Four-Seven:

- Introduction to employability enhancement and career planning.
- Possible guest teacher on employability (i.e. from the Student Employment office).
- Possible guest teacher on oral communication (i.e. from the Communications faculty).
- Second group exploratory project: Career Path Investigation
- Second group oral presentation (based on student-selected career-path course: An analysis of the course syllabus and one writing and/or reading assignment from that course. The course's literacy requirements should be highlighted by the group as an aid to students' career planning and goal development).

Week Seven-Ten:

- Synthesis of college learning and employability enhancement experiences.
- Possible guest teacher on goal setting (i.e. an advisor).
- Career Center visit.

Week Nine-Eleven:

- Individual oral presentations: Book reports.
- Computer lab introduction to academic computing: Basic MS Word use.

- Preparation of short goal statement/explanation paper.
- Individual oral presentations: Goal explanations.
- Final assessments.

Week Twelve:

- Final conferences to discuss students' goal statements and their success in meeting course objectives.

English 098, Basic Sentence Skills:

In English 098, students have the opportunity to build confidence in their language abilities. Course activities will help students develop their expressive powers to produce personal, social, and academic writing for various purposes. Significant time is spent on sentence-building skills. Graded S/U.

By actively participating in the English 098 course, students will:

1. Use reading as a stimulus for discussion, writing, and thinking about writing.
2. Use writing as a way to discover and develop their own ideas.
3. Explore their ideas in informal journal writing.
4. Use the writing process, including idea-generating activities, drafting, revising, and editing to produce meaningful whole texts geared to specific audiences.
5. Revise their writing to more effectively meet the needs of their audience and to better achieve a desired effect on their audience.
6. Use peer feedback and self evaluation in the revision process.
7. Reflect about their development as a writer and about why the revisions that they make to their writing are helpful to their readers.
8. Use clarifying and descriptive detail to develop ideas in sentences and whole texts.

9. Identify and correct surface errors, particularly those involving sentence boundaries.
10. Develop flexibility to use a variety of sentence structures.
11. Choose words effectively and with an awareness of purpose.
12. Participate actively in groups and in the class as a whole.
13. Demonstrate responsible college- and workplace-appropriate behaviors including daily attendance and on-time completion of assignments.
14. Develop word-processing and basic computing skills.
15. Format their formal documents in the MLA style.

Brief Description of Teaching Methodology, English 098

English 098 teachers build the semester's work around a variety of writing-based activities and assignments.

The standard ingredients are:

- frequent, informal journal entries not graded for "correctness"
- expressive/personal essays (typically no more than two 1½ to three-page essays over the semester)
- instruction and practice in each stage of the writing process
- frequent mini-lessons and hands-on practice in sentence combining and sentence boundary recognition/correction
- writing workshops prior to essay revision
- class discussion of readings
- small group sentence work
- regular outside-of-class reading (usually a combination of teacher-selected and student-selected material)
- computer lab instruction in Microsoft Word (setting up MLA formatting, especially)
- individual conferencing at mid-term and the end of the semester
- a three-day practice final exam (required in all 098's)
- a three-day final exam (required in all 098's)

Many instructors also use:

- student presentations (group and/or individual)
- letter writing
- computer lab instruction in using Blackboard
- Blackboard-enhanced instruction
- student-led mini-lessons
- a student publication project

English 099, Basic Writing:

In English 099, students have the opportunity to expand their abilities and confidence in the writing process: Pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Through practice, students will learn the basic principles of focus, development, organization, and sentence-level clarity. Graded S/U.

By actively participating in the English 099 course, students will:

1. Use reading as a stimulus for discussion, writing, and thinking about writing.
2. Use writing as a way to discover and develop their own ideas.
3. Explore their ideas in informal journal writing.
4. Explore various forms of writing and the possibility of taking creative risks when they write.
5. Use the writing process, including idea-generating activities, drafting, revising, and editing to produce meaningful whole texts geared to specific audiences.
6. Focus their writing around a central idea.
7. Develop the central idea of essays and other forms of writing with details, examples, and/or explanation.
8. Organize writing in a reader-friendly manner. Longer pieces have a distinct beginning, middle, and end.
9. Revise their writing to more effectively meet the needs of their audience and to better achieve a desired effect on their audience.

10. Use peer feedback and self evaluation in the revision process.
11. Reflect about their development as a writer and about why the revisions that they make to their writing are helpful to their readers.
12. Identify and correct surface errors, particularly those involving sentence boundaries.
13. Develop flexibility to use a variety of sentence structures.
14. Choose words effectively and with an awareness of purpose.
15. Participate actively in groups and in the class as a whole.
16. Demonstrate responsible college and workplace appropriate behaviors including daily attendance and on-time completion of assignments.
17. Develop word-processing and basic computing skills.
18. Format their formal documents in the MLA style.

Brief Description of Teaching Methodology, English 099

English 099 teachers build the semester's work around a variety of writing-based activities and assignments.

The standard ingredients are:

- frequent, informal journal entries not graded for "correctness"
- expressive/personal essays (typically no more than three 1½ to three-page essays over the semester)
- instruction and practice in each stage of the writing process
- frequent mini-lessons and hands-on practice in sentence combining and sentence boundary recognition/correction
- writing workshops prior to essay revision
- class discussion of readings
- small group sentence work
- regular outside-of-class reading (usually a combination of teacher-selected and student-selected material)
- computer lab instruction in Microsoft Word (setting up MLA formatting, especially)

- a mid-semester portfolio project including writing students have revised over time, a self-reflective essay, and evidence of MLA-formatted word processing ability
- individual conferencing at mid-term and the end of the semester
- a final portfolio project including writing students have revised over time, a self-reflective essay, and evidence of MLA-formatted word processing ability (required in all 099's)
- a three-day practice final exam (required in all 099's)
- a three-day final exam (required in all 099's)

Many instructors also use:

- student presentations (group and/or individual)
- letter writing
- computer lab instruction in using Blackboard
- Blackboard-enhanced instruction
- student-led mini-lessons

Department-wide Final Assessments in English 095, 098, and 099:

English 095 Final Project Overview: Goal Explanation

All sections of English 095 end the semester with the same “capstone” project which is described below in an overview for students:

For your final project, you will pull together many of the skills you have practiced over the semester and demonstrate your ability to type a paper in the format most used by teachers at Mott and out in the “real” world. This is an individual project, not a group project, though you will be getting some help from other students.

A list of the major jobs to accomplish for this project:

1. *Use Microsoft Word 2007 to type up and save a rough draft(s) of your paper in MLA (Modern Language Association) style.*
2. *Send your teacher an email attachment of your rough draft.*
3. *Reply to your teacher's message.*
4. *Revise your rough draft.*
5. *Present your paper/goal to the class in an oral presentation.*
6. *After your presentation, use your audience's feedback and the self-evaluation form to help you revise your paper, again.*
7. *Edit your paper for correctness.*
8. *Email your final paper to your teacher as an MS Word attachment by the deadline.*

English 098 and 099 Practice and Final Exams

All English 098 and 099 sections share departmental three-day practice exams and final exams. The exams emphasize the writing process that we encourage all semester: On day one, we distribute the exam sheet with a variety of essay topics from which students choose one. We encourage students to pre-write and prepare a "cheat sheet" for the exam at home, and on day two, they write the exam in class with their aid of their "cheat sheet" (which cannot resemble a rough draft). The exam is graded, and then on day three, the students revise and/or edit their graded essay.

The English 099 final exam is graded by a team of readers rather than by the classroom teacher. We use these holistic team-reading sessions as our best opportunity to discuss what we should be looking for in student writing by the end of the semester. We have found these sessions to be vital in providing instructional/pedagogical consistency across all sections of 099 and in developing the camaraderie among teachers that we enjoy. The classroom teacher does comment on his or her own students' papers, but only after at least two other teachers assess the students' readiness to proceed to English 101. In this way, we

keep our personal feelings about our students from influencing our grading on this important assessment of student learning.

English 099 Final Portfolio Assessment

A few weeks after mid-semester, English 099 students begin preparing their Final Portfolio.

- We share a common collection date because we want to ensure that all students have the same opportunity and time to work on their portfolio, and we want to make sure that the teachers have enough time to grade the portfolios before the team-reading sessions for the final exam begin.
- While individual teachers have flexibility in designing their own portfolio assignment and reflective essay (which students must include in their portfolios), we share the Final Portfolio Rubric and the Student Self-Evaluation Form. Teachers' assignments should enable the students to fill out the self-evaluation form and should reflect the rubric's content so that the rubric makes sense to the students and facilitates grading.
- We strongly encourage all 099 teachers to also assign a small Mid-term Portfolio project so that students have had this "practice" experience prior to the end of the semester. The mid-term portfolio assignment should mimic the final in terms of the grading rubric and the student self-evaluation form, and a reflective essay should also be required. We encourage teachers to also require some elements in the mid-term portfolio to be typed in MLA format since that is part of the final requirement, too.

Coordination of the Developmental Writing Program

- The coordinator (currently Julie Steffey) is an experienced, full-time English faculty member appointed by the Dean of Humanities to facilitate collegial conversation about program goals, teaching issues, and course development and revision, as well as to coordinate each semester's common

assessments, the assessment calendar, and the team-reading schedule.

- The coordinator reviews part-time, adjunct, and probationary full-time developmental writing faculty members' syllabi at the beginning of each regular semester and provides early and continuing guidance on teaching in our program. The coordinator meets with/emails with all developmental faculty on a regular basis and organizes our monthly professional development meetings.
- There is no coordination of the program during spring/summer terms, although the coordinator has been setting up the final assessments, the assessment calendar, the team-reading schedule, finding extra readers for the exams, and participating as a reader when possible.
- The coordinator puts together, and revises annually, departmental course packs for English 095, 098, and 099, which include sample teaching materials contributed by teachers in the program and chapters on teaching developmental writing at MCC, in general, and on teaching each course, specifically.
- The coordinator teaches a full load of classes, which in English is four classes, and coordinates as an overload.
- To date, there has been very little coordination between the Writing and Reading programs, though we have all wanted to work together and build more connections between what we do.
- To date, there has been no coordination between the Writing and Mathematics programs, though we share many students and teaching challenges.