Helpful Hints/Recommendations from the OTM English/Oral Communication Panel

January 11, 2010

English Composition I and II

Following these guidelines will help ensure that you provide complete and thorough information about the course being submitted for inclusion in the Transfer Module:


   Colleges can use the information on these pages to guide curriculum development for these two courses; the committee uses the learning outcomes to evaluate whether or not the course is appropriate for inclusion in the Transfer Module. Please note that the second course may be a course which is designed and designated as a writing course that follows the first college-level English Composition course at an institution, as long as the outcomes of English Composition II are met in the course.

2. Select the best person to provide information about the course.

   This would be someone who is very knowledgeable about the course, usually someone who teaches the course frequently. This might be the chair of the department, a lead instructor for the course, or an instructor; it is probably not someone whose duties are administrative rather than instructional.

3. Answer the questions asked in the CEMS boxes, rather than simply cutting and pasting from the syllabus or giving vague answers.

   The information in the boxes should clearly communicate information needed to evaluate the course. The committee needs to know how we would know that, for example, that an English Composition I course is college level. Simply saying that it is college level does not do that; saying that there is a developmental writing course before this course or that students have to achieve a certain placement score before taking English Composition I provides us the necessary information. Similarly, if the person filling in the answer to a particular question in the CEMS box simply pastes a line or two from the course syllabus, that is often not enough to show that an objective has been met: we would need to read in the answer and see in the syllabus itself how that student learning outcome is met.

4. Provide a detailed daily syllabus (along with a Master Syllabus, if possible) which clearly demonstrates how the learning outcomes will be met.

   We examine the syllabus itself to see if the syllabus demonstrates that the various learning outcomes are being addressed and how thoroughly they are being addressed. So, for example, if a course identifies itself as a discipline-specific second writing course but the syllabus does not show that there is actual writing instruction being done in the class and a textbook which would support a writing focus, we would have no grounds for believing a statement in the CEMS box which claims that the main focus is writing. Or if
the outcome is addressed but rather superficially (as evidenced by the daily syllabus), we would have concerns about whether or not the outcome is met.

5. Include clear and ample information about the writing expectations in the course.

We would find it more helpful, for example, if the syllabus includes descriptions of the longer (more substantial or essay-length) assignments, rather than just identifying an assignment as the “analysis essay.” Without knowing what the assignment specifications are, it’s hard to evaluate whether or not that assignment will challenge the writer to develop greater expertise in writing and meet the learning outcomes.

NOTE: Sample syllabi are not available.