

Beginning of Semester Writing Assessment and Mid-Term Outcomes

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One of the major requirements of by BBA 407 Strategic Management class is a group research paper that is worth 25% of a student's grade. Each semester has seen the development of several superior papers. Each semester has also seen a number of defective papers. As a result, I introduced a short writing component to the Diagnostic Exam I administer at the start of each semester. The goal of the writing component was to determine whether students with writing-related issues could be identified from the onset. If so, interventions to bolster their writing could be introduced.

Considering the intellectual value of writing and linkage between effective reading and effective writing, I ran the data from the Diagnostic Exam against my class's Mid-Term results. Each of the individual components used to evaluate student writing skills appeared to provide insight into the Mid-Term outcomes. A third variable tied to prior student research also provided insight.

Given this information, I assigned numeric values for student performance on the two categories of skills assessed on the writing section of the Diagnostic Exam and the student research variable. "Weak" performers received a value of -1; Strong performers received a value of +1. Students who had conducted prior research received a value of +1 while the others received a value of -1. The values were then summed up to provide a total score and that total score was standardized.

The standardized total scores provided strong insight into student performance on the Mid-Term Exam. They also provided strong insight into student performance on the case problem, which required students to apply course concepts, analyze data, and reach informed judgments.

Standardized Writing-Research Score and the Mid-Term Exam Results:

Mid-Term Results	< 0σ	>0σ	Total Pool
Mean Exam Score	69.0	90.4	79.7
Mean Case Score	4.3	6.7	5.5
% below 60	29%	0%	14%
% below 70	50%	0%	25%
% 70 or above	50%	100%	75%
% 80 or above	21%	71%	46%
Sample Size	14	14	28

The data revealed that all of the students who received Mid-Term scores below 70 had received below average standardized scores from the Writing-Research component of the Diagnostic Exam. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of those who had above average standardized Writing-Research scores received a grade of 80 or above on the Mid-Term Exam. Students with above average standardized Writing-Research scores also accounted for 90% of the students who received 90 or above grades on their Mid-Term exam.

The above exercise will be repeated next semester. If the outcomes provide similar insight, a more comprehensive early intervention approach targeting the students with below average standardized Writing-Research scores will be devised.