

**AUTHENTICATED WRITING ASSESSMENTS
OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION GRADUATE STUDENTS**

A Thesis

by

KIMBERLY DAWN WRIGHT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2004

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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ABSTRACT

Authenticated Writing Assessments of
Agricultural Education Graduate Students. (August 2004)

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Dr. James Lindner

Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002), noted that agricultural education's core is communication because it is the component that spreads a variety of ideas to a large group of people and is the essential form of education needed for scholarship. Research is needed to ensure that agricultural education students are taught to write, effectively and efficiently, an argument paper that establishes the following components: coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, sources, and grammar.

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine if the writing competencies of the Doc@Distance graduate students have changed or improved based on the recommendations made in a previous study. A census of the Doc@Distance students was taken for this study. Thirty students submitted an argument writing sample that they wrote during the orientation week of their program in August 2003.

The conclusions of this study found that 68.8% of the 2004 Doc@Distance Cohort suggested inadequacy in writing an argument paper, and 71.4% of the 2007 Doc@Distance Cohort suggested inadequacy in writing an argument paper. Ending Cohort '04 demonstrated weakness in coherence, argument, summary, and grammar.

Beginning Cohort `07 demonstrated weakness in coherence, audience awareness, summary, and grammar.

As a result of this study, it is recommended that a follow-up study be conducted on Cohort `07 in two years to determine if writing abilities for argument papers have changed and to assess the overall changes in argument-writing for this cohort. It is recommended that a study be conducted on Cohort `10 upon admission to determine their argument-writing ability. Ending Cohort `07 and Beginning Cohort `10 should be tested to determine if a difference exists between students completing the program and students entering the program. It is recommended that undergraduate agricultural education students be tested to determine their argument-writing competencies. It is recommended to compare and contrast on-campus agricultural education students and distance education students at Texas A&M University. Finally, it is recommended that Cohorts `07 and `10 be evaluated on their competencies to write data reports, narratives, and informative and research analysis papers.

DEDICATION

To Steve and Rita Wright,
Karla Griffis, and
Keri Wright

You may not always have understood all my crazy dreams, aspirations, and goals,
but you always stood beside me, loved me, and supported me.
And for that I am eternally grateful.

This is for all of you.

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Dr. Tracy Rutherford has impacted my life in such a short amount of time. Within a year, she has been my teacher, committee chair, and advisor, but more importantly she has been my role model, friend, and mentor. Thank you for sticking through the tough times with me. I will never forget all of the words of guidance you have given me.

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I would also like to send a big thank you to the entire Agricultural Education department. I found my second home when I walked into Scoates in the fall of 2003. It will be hard to leave this place in August, but I know that I will always be welcomed back with open arms.

There are several other people who have served as my “glue” throughout my thesis writing and graduate degree. Justin Thomas supported me, encouraged me, and pushed me to achieve success. There were many times when I couldn’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, but somehow you always found it and showed it to me. Thank you for loving me and encouraging me to succeed. Kimberly Clifton has been my punching

bag, counselor, and therapist over this past year. You always listened and gave me good advice, but more importantly you always gave me love, support, and encouragement. You are the best friend a girl could ever have. Kayla (Kohls) Rathmann, Susan Wilson, Laura Real, and Christyn Cochran are my Scoates Hall sisters. Thank you for being a part of my life and success. Even though our paths will soon part, each of you have made a permanent impression in my heart.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	x
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historical Background.....	2
Vision for Student Cohort	3
Current Student Cohort	4
Students Participating in Doc@Distance Program	5
Purpose of Program (Doc@Distance).....	6
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose and Objectives	7
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Writing	8
Graduate Students’ Writing.....	9
Agricultural Education Graduate Students’ Writing	12
Statement of the Problem	14
III METHODOLOGY	16
Purpose and Objectives	16
Research Design.....	16
Population and Sample.....	17
Data Collection.....	17
Instrumentation.....	19
Data Analysis	19
Statistical Analysis	21
Delimitations	21

CHAPTER	Page
IV FINDINGS	23
Findings Related to Objective One	23
Findings Related to Objective Two.....	24
Findings Related to Objective Three.....	40
V SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	42
Purpose of Study	42
Summary of Findings	42
Objective One.....	42
Key Findings	43
Conclusion One	43
Implications.....	43
Objective Two	44
Key Findings	44
Conclusion Two	46
Implications.....	46
Objective Three.....	46
Key Findings	46
Conclusion Three	46
Implications.....	47
Programmatic Implications	47
Recommendations for Additional Research.....	49
REFERENCES	50
APPENDIX A	54
APPENDIX B	60
APPENDIX C	62
APPENDIX D	64
APPENDIX E.....	66
APPENDIX F	68
VITA	70

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
1 Authenticated Writing Scores for Beginning and Ending Doc @ Distance Students	24
2 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Coherence Competence.....	26
3 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Audience Awareness Competence	27
4 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Argument Competence.....	28
5 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Summary Competence	29
6 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Sources Competence	30
7 Ending Cohort `04 Assessment on Grammar Competence.....	31
8 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Coherence Competence.....	34
9 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Audience Awareness Competence	35
10 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Argument Competence.....	36
11 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Summary Competence	37
12 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Sources Competence	38
13 Beginning Cohort `07 Assessment on Grammar Competence.....	39

TABLE	Page
14 Beginning and Ending Doc@Distance Primary Reason for Failure	40
15 Comparison of Authenticated Writing Scores by Cohort	41

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has always had a very important place in our society. From the food we eat to the clothes we wear, agriculture is everywhere. Agricultural education is a social science that educates individuals in areas such as leadership, technological advancements, communications, and teaching techniques. Overall, the discipline of agricultural education has been effectively instructing students in each of these areas. However, the discipline of communications in the agricultural education field has become a concern for faculty, researchers, and students. Students involved in an agricultural education program are typically effective oral communicators, but lack the writing competencies needed to be an effective communicator or educator.

These concerns have been identified by the Doc@Distance Program, a pioneer distance education program offered by Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University. Because of the youth of this program, constant evaluation is administered to determine concepts or ideas for improvement. By reviewing the creation, short history, and purpose of the Doc@Distance Program, insight can be gained for future students in this program and programs that may mimic it in the future.

This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

Historical Background

In March 1996, it was determined by several administrators at Texas A&M University that the number of state employees (mostly in the capacity of Texas Cooperative Extension) retiring in the upcoming years greatly exceeded the number of people seeking a doctoral degree in the area of agricultural education. An estimated 100 people with doctoral degrees would be needed to fill these positions. Thus, the creation of the Doc@Distance Program began to develop as a joint degree from both Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

The foundation of the program was established to create a program that offered doctoral degrees to individuals who are employed, and wish to gain higher knowledge in the agricultural education field. The vision was that most of the individuals who would enroll in this program would be mid-career level and seeking to advance in their fields. The option of distance education seemed to be an effective solution to time and location for this type of individual (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

During the developmental stages of this program, administrators from Texas A&M University and Texas Tech determined that no other college or university offered a joint degree in the area of agricultural education that resembled this one. It was also determined that only one other program in any field offered a distance education degree program similar to the Doc@Distance Program (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

The Doc@Distance Program allows doctoral students to use the latest technological advancements to enroll in and complete distance education courses in partial fulfillment of their degrees. Until this program was established, all doctoral degrees obtainable in Texas have had an on-campus residence requirement within the framework of courses. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) said that the Doc@Distance Program is a model for distance education in Texas (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003).

The Doc@Distance curriculum was designed for Texas agricultural professionals (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003). The courses are taught using WebCT, a Web-based course development program, interactive television (ITV), and face-to-face meetings (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003).

On April 20, 2000, THECB approved a joint doctoral degree for Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University (www.aged.tamu.edu). The Doc@Distance Program is a four-year degree plan that offers a Joint Doctorate of Education in Agricultural Education from both of the accredited institutions with a fifty-fifty teaching load from each university (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004). The degree was recommended by the University Graduate Curriculums and Board of Regents at both universities (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003).

Vision for Student Cohort

During the developmental stages of the Doc@Distance Program, it was envisioned that 30 candidates would be admitted to Cohort '04 in fall 2000. Webster's Dictionary defines a cohort as "a group of persons sharing a particular statistical or

demographic characteristic” (p. 255). Every two years after that, a new cohort would be admitted, creating an overlapping pattern in the degrees attained by students. After the first round of applications was processed, the admissions panel determined that of 30 applicants, only 20 were worthy of acceptance. The admissions process included a written application and an interview. The oral interview was weighted more in the admissions process. The administrative panel said that they believe a student’s writing capability can be improved through coursework and practice, but it is more difficult to improve a student’s oral presentation skills (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University administrators also determined that new student cohorts would be admitted every three years instead of every two years due to staff, finances, and facility issues (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

Based on the findings and recommendations of a previous descriptive study by Linder, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002), the writing criteria for Cohort `07 was given more emphasis during the admissions process.

Current Student Cohort

The first cohort of 20 students was admitted to the program on August 8, 2000. These 20 individuals were all from the state of Texas. Cohort `04’s first meeting took place in Lubbock, Texas, at the campus of Texas Tech University. The program includes 64 semester hour credits and lasts four years (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003).

Since that time Cohort `04 has decreased from 20 students to 16 students. One student left prior to the beginning of classes, two students left the program in the first semester, and one student died in summer 2003. The remaining students are in their final semesters of the program (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004). These 16 students are made up of 10 males and six females. The students range in age from 32 to 54, with a mean age of 42. Fifteen students are white and one student is Hispanic. All members of Cohort `04 did not take the writing portion of the GRE because it was not available at the time the test was administered for this cohort. (SIMS)

Cohort `07 admitted 14 students into the program in the fall of 2003. Cohort `07 included students from six states: Arizona, Indiana, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Texas. These students are comprised of nine males and five females. The students range in age from 26 to 49, with a mean age of 38. All students are white. Only two of the 14 students did not take the writing portion of the GRE. (SIMS) Of the 14 students admitted, one student quit the program after the introductory seminar. The remaining students are in their second semester of the program (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

Students Participating in Doc@Distance Program

Students enrolled in the Doc@Distance program are pursuing a Joint Doctor of Education in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University. Most of the students participating in this program are involved in Extension or some aspect of agriculture. Careers of the individuals include: Extension agent, agricultural science teacher, agricultural communicator, and university faculty or staff.

All have some type of agricultural education background (G.C. Shinn, personal communication, January 16, 2004).

Purpose of Program (Doc@Distance)

The purpose of the Doc@Distance Program is to offer a complete doctoral degree program at a distance it offers a specialized curriculum created for professionals involved with agriculture in Texas; establishes a high-quality learning environment that stimulates integration, discovery, and application; contains expertise from both Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University in the area of agricultural education; administers skills necessary for professionals who would like to advance their careers in agriculture; offers a degree that is awarded from two institutions; and gives those already involved professionally an opportunity to further their careers by obtaining a doctoral degree (Department of Agricultural Education, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Doc@Distance students cannot effectively write an argument paper. Previous descriptive research has shown that writing competencies in graduate students are weak in all areas of study. Agricultural education graduate students have demonstrated weak competencies in the area of written communication. Additional strategies may be needed to improve agricultural education graduate students' writing abilities in order to provide more credible researchers and professionals for the marketplace.

The purpose of this study was to describe the writing competencies of the students in the Doc@Distance program based on a six-part competency scale for writing an argument paper.

Purpose and Objectives

The specific objectives for this study are listed below:

1. Describe graduate students' competencies in writing an argument paper.
2. Describe Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities based on the following writing competencies: coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, source, and grammar.
3. Assess differences in graduate students' authenticated writing scores.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The ability to express one's self correctly, clearly, and articulately may be the most important attribute for students to possess when entering a graduate program.

- Dr. Jimmy Lindner, Texas A&M University (2002)

Writing

Emig (1988) emphasized that writing is one of the preeminent tools for learning because it involves all of the processes of the brain: doing, depicting, and symbolizing (wording). In three studies conducted by three theorists, it was established that writing is not only used to report knowledge, but has the potential to be a valuable tool to acquire knowledge (Emig, 1977; Applebee, 1981; Walshe, 1987). In many cases, students write only to reiterate what they have learned. They do not think creatively or elaboratively about the subject matter that has been presented to them (Reeves, Flowers, & Jewell 1993).

In today's society, it is perceived that individuals have been taught how to write since the first grade, and this implies that they know how to write. Many people believe that since they know how to write, there is no reason to waste their time rereading or editing work that they write (Patterson & Ketchum, 1993). However, current writing practices do not develop a student's writing ability and do not provide a means of understanding the most useful and beneficial writing techniques (Applebee, 1981).

A simple writing principle bases its foundation on the fact that when a student writes, an opportunity is created for the student to process the information in a physical form that can be viewed and reviewed by others (Reeves, Flowers, & Jewell 1993).

Writing is a method of improving the thinking ability and reasoning process of students in academic subject material (McGinley & Tiemey, 1989). Writing allows a student to clarify ideas and relationships between those ideas, thus enhancing the quality of education received (Walshe, 1987). Writing allows a student to interact with a topic in a much different way than oral communication. When a student expresses ideas or opinions on paper, an opportunity is presented to rethink and rewrite his/her thought process in several drafts. In oral communication, once the statement has left the mouth, there is no opportunity to reword or restate it. Writing is a systematic way of arranging thoughts, opinions, and reflections. A student's ideas can be measured and developed through writing (Stoecker, Schimibauer, Mullin, & Young, 1993).

Graduate Students' Writing

In 1985, Richard R. Wright stated, "It is generally acknowledged that many students in graduate schools today are poor writers" (p. 35). This statement raised numerous questions about how to identify poor writers and how to assist them in seeking solutions to their writing problems (Wright, 1985).

Graduate school differs from undergraduate school because a student is no longer tested by weekly quizzes or multiple tests, but rather by a piece of written work that expresses the student's individual opinions on certain topics (Lindner, Murphy, & Wingenbach, 2002). The writing demands placed on graduate students are very different from those of undergraduate students, and established and published academic writers (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992).

One of the most essential components to better prepare a student for a graduate program is the ability to communicate information and ideas in the written form for others to understand (Linder, Dooley, & Murphy, 2001). Research is a key component to a graduate program. Many students in graduate degree programs are evaluated by a single research paper or professional paper, and good writing is an indicator of good research (Emig, 1988). An integral part of research is writing, and when a student writes, a student thinks (Golding & Mascaro, 1985-86).

In 1990, Boyer defined scholars as “academics who conduct research, publish, and then perhaps convey their knowledge to students or apply what they have learned” (p.15). Thus, graduate students are faced with the challenge of becoming scholars. As a scholar, students must communicate ideas from their discipline by sharing their ideas and research findings (Williams, 1997). Those within an academic discipline who choose not to write are oftentimes not heard (Cano, Hall, & Martin, 1994).

Seven key elements have been identified when assessing a graduate student’s writing ability: Test design (defining the construct); task design (timing of tasks and topic choice); test administration (test delivery and response mode); scoring and reporting (scoring issues and reporting issues); consequences of writing test formats (bias and educational consequences); reliability; and predictive validity of writing assessments (Breland, Bridgeman, & Fowles, 1999). However, it is stated that an assessment of a student’s writing should center on a concept that “is appropriate for a particular purpose and population” (Breland, Bridgeman, & Fowles, 1999, p.1). Specific

writing formats are different within different disciplines, and students need instruction based on the techniques within their fields (Golding & Mascaro, 1985-86).

Because each discipline has a different writing pattern, students enrolled in the academic program may not fully understand the style of expression that is suggested (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992). Students are expected to display certain styles of discourse in their writing that is used and accepted by established academic writers in their fields, but none of this knowledge is prefaced for the students prior to enrolling in the graduate programs and beginning their thesis-writing stages of the programs (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992).

Self-authorship is a key component to a graduate program. Typically, graduate students are expected to view knowledge contextually and to use evidence to interpret the information in writing. However, graduate students do not fully utilize writing in their undergraduate degree programs, and do not feel prepared by the end of their senior years for what lies ahead graduate schools (Baxter Magolda, 1998). Many students are not taught about self-authorship as undergraduates, but are expected to know the process upon entering graduate schools (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992).

Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson (1992) identified three aspects of poor writing by graduate students. First, many students leave the writing portion of their degree until the end of their final year in the program. Continual writing throughout the program is not often the case, causing greater difficulty for the student. Second, it is expected that the writing skills of a student will strengthen during their degree programs. However, just as with the first conclusion, this is not the case. There is generally no increase in

writing efficacy or in the ease of writing among graduate students during their degree programs. Third, students do not believe that they are poor writers or believe that they possess any significant problems with writing. These students do not seek assistance to improve their writing based on their own opinions of their writing abilities (Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 1992).

Agricultural Education Graduate Students' Writing

At the core of agricultural education is communication because it is needed to spread a wide variety of ideas to a large audience. Written communication is essential to those involved in scholarship in order to educate others (Lindner, Murphy, & Wingenbach, 2002).

An important component to the discipline of agricultural education is research. This importance is derived from being a young discipline that is often not fully understood by others in the scientific community. A great quantity of research in agricultural education is conducted by graduate students (Williams, 1997). However, some graduate students have low writing competencies that could potentially cause problems (Lindner, Murphy, & Wingenbach, 2002).

Many previous studies have not examined writing as a competency that needs to be addressed as a problem with agricultural education. In 1981, Shippy identified 246 competencies in 10 categories that agricultural education graduates needed to possess or have some knowledge that pertains to the topic. The ten categories are: “program planning, development, and evaluation; planning instruction; execution of instruction; evaluation of instruction; student vocational organization; supervised occupational

experience; management; guidance; school-community relations; and professional role development” (p. 30).

Only a minimal amount of information is known about the written communication competencies needed by agricultural education graduate students in order to be successful in their graduate program (Linder & Dooley, 2002). The problem that many researchers have faced in writing assessment in the past is that it is difficult to score a writing assignment. The writing ability of a student may be demonstrated in a variety of constructs, such as reporting a news event, critiquing an argument, revising a memo, deciding grammatical construction use, determining effective ways to introduce a topic, and interpreting, synthesizing, organizing, analyzing, and understanding linguistic structures. The principle discipline should be taken into consideration when assessing a student’s writing competencies (Breland, Bridgeman, & Fowles, 1999).

In 1989, Bowen and Cooper determined that students believed that courses in communication and journalism were more vital to their education and career than agriculture or general education courses. Graduate students are seeking higher education in order to better prepare themselves for leadership/management positions within agribusinesses or to prepare for international development (Williams, 1997). By examining the competencies needed by professionals in the agricultural industry, new curricula should be designed so that students are more competitive in the market (Sprecker & Rudd, 1997). Writing course requirements for graduate programs were once conceived to be remedial, expensive, and impractical (Wright, 1985). Wright said

that writing problems couldn't be solved by guiding the student to the English department and hoping for the best outcome.

Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002), addressed the issue of writing competencies in a recent study. Agricultural education graduate students from selected populations demonstrated weaknesses in several writing competency areas: argument, coherence, grammar, summary, audience awareness, and sources. The three areas with the most difficulty are argument, coherence, and grammar. Strategies were developed to help improve the writing competencies of agricultural education graduate students based on these findings (Lindner, Murphy, & Wingenbach, 2002).

In 2002, Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach made several recommendations based on their study to improve the writing ability of agricultural education graduate students. The first recommendation is to assess the students applying to an agricultural education graduate program using the GRE writing portion or the writing samples submitted with his or her admissions packet. Graduate faculty should examine their own writing abilities and make sure they are qualified to teach competent writing. Another recommendation required more writing skills in the criteria used in graded in graduate courses. The final recommendation was to implement a writing for publication course that would require the graduate student to submit and publish an article (Lindner, Murphy, & Wingenbach, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Doc@Distance students cannot effectively write an argument paper. Previous descriptive research has shown that writing competencies in graduate students are weak

in all areas of study. Effective writing ultimately creates effective learning. Agricultural education graduate students have demonstrated weak competencies in the area of written communication. Additional strategies may be needed to improve agricultural education graduate students' writing abilities in order to provide more credible researchers and professionals for the marketplace.

The purpose of this study was to describe the writing competencies of the students in the Doc@Distance program based on a six-part competency scale for writing an argument paper.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Doc@Distance Program is highly regarded for its pioneering efforts in distance education. In order to improve the quality of education that this program offers, students' strengths and weaknesses should be evaluated and better understood, primarily focusing on writing competencies. No such research has been conducted in the agricultural education discipline focusing on the Doc@Distance Program. By examining a specific area of the program, the success or effectiveness of the program can be determined.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to describe the writing competencies of the students in the Doc@Distance program based on a six-part competency scale for writing an argument paper. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Describe graduate students' competencies in writing an argument paper.
2. Describe Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities based on the following writing competencies: coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, source, and grammar.
3. Assess differences in graduate students' authenticated writing scores.

Research Design

A descriptive ex-post facto design was used for this study. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), described descriptive research as a type of quantitative research that involves making careful descriptions of educational phenomena. Descriptive research may not be

more than reporting the characteristics of one sample at one point in time (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

The dependent variable for this study was the derived score of the writing sample, called the authenticated writing score. The independent variables were the cohort groups and amount of completed coursework.

Population and Sample

This study was a sample in time of the Doc@Distance program. Thirty individuals were included in this study. The Doc@Distance Program was chosen because its online environment requires a different skill set of its students. This sample in time was criterion-based because no one else in any other degree program meets the description. The information is generalizable only to these specific Doc@Distance students.

The accessible population consisted of those members of Cohort '04 and Cohort '07 who attended a seminar in Lubbock, Texas, prior to the Fall 2003 semester. All students in the Doc@Distance program were required to attend this seminar.

Data Collection

To analyze the writing samples from the Ending Cohort '04 and the Beginning Cohort '07, content analysis techniques were used. There were 16 students in the Ending Cohort '04 and 14 students in the Beginning Cohort '07.

One week prior to their first meeting, each student received an e-mail informing them that they would be exhibiting their writing skills at their first meeting. The e-mail provided two position papers that presented the pro and con sides of an argument. The

students were told that they needed to familiarize themselves with the articles and be prepared to handwrite a paper the following week at their one-week seminar class at Texas Tech University.

In an effort to ensure anonymity of the subjects, the researcher was not present for the collection of data from the weeklong seminar class at Texas Tech University. Instructors for the Doc@Distance seminar class were present for the data collection and administered the writing assessment.

The instructors informed the students of the instructions for the writing assessment; in 90 minutes they were to handwrite a well-formed, grammatically correct argument based on their readings of two position papers; to consider that the audience was other than agricultural education graduate students; to begin their papers with an overview of the two articles; to use references as required by American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines; and to proofread and edit their papers prior to turning them in to the instructor.

The students were given oral and written instructions, APA documentation guidelines, additional copies of the articles if needed, and two bound and blank writing journals, often called bluebooks.

The students were advised to spend 15-20 minutes outlining and drafting their argument papers in one of the bluebooks, 40-55 minutes actually writing the argument papers, and 10-15 minutes proofing and editing their final versions in the second bluebook. They were reminded that they had 90 minutes to complete the writing assignment.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to gather data was designed by the Writing Programs Office at Texas A&M University. The GRE Writing Assessment (GRE, 2002) was not used because this is a longitudinal study, and the GRE would not have been an effective tool to measure writing competencies or to analyze sentence-level structure in agricultural education graduate students in the Doc@Distance Program.

This instrument consisted of three parts: two articles, instructions for writing the paper, and APA documentation guidelines that provided students with the information needed to cite references correctly and use quotations correctly. The students were provided with the two articles through the e-mail one week prior to their meeting. The topic of the two articles discussed tenure for university professors, one arguing in favor of tenure, and one arguing against tenure (Ekelund & Dawsey, 1997). The instructors of the seminar course collected the papers at the end of the time period.

Data Analysis

The completed papers were delivered to the Director of the University Writing Center at Texas A&M University for assessment and analysis (Gibson, n.d.). Two professionally trained evaluators were hired to score each essay using an overall writing-strength rubric and sentence-level structure rubric. The overall writing-strength rubric offers four possible scores: 4=demonstrates adequacy; 3=suggests adequacy; 2=suggests inadequacy; and 1=demonstrates inadequacy.

Six writing competency categories made up the sentence-level structure rubric, and they are defined as follows:

- Coherence is the development of a clear thesis, and an introduction that sets the stage for the argument and well-constructed paragraphs in the body of the text.
- Audience awareness is the ability to write to an appropriate level for an identified audience and to make appropriate appeals using correct tone and voice.
- Argument is the development of a supported and logical argument about an issue with important consequences for both author and audience.
- Summary is the development of a clear summary drawing on the established argument and references.
- Sources are the appropriate use of references in the paper following APA guidelines.
- Grammar is the ability to write a grammatically correct paper.

The Writing Program at Texas A&M University has an extended and constant reputation for evaluating and scoring student writing tests using both the overall and sentence-level structure assessment rubrics. The reliability and validity of the Writing Program rubric were established through another previous study (Ashe, 1994). A prediction of the student's success at later writing was established using this instrument. In establishing predictive validity, 95 percent of the students who received a passing score from the Writing Program rubric passed the National College CLEP College Composition Test. Reliability was established by looking at variability within an evaluator's score, in scoring between pairs of evaluators, and in scoring across all students over time (Breland, 1987). The two evaluators must reach a consensus on each student's overall writing strength. Over time, evaluator's scores tended to remain

constant. A consensus of evaluators must agree on a student's score to ensure inter-rater reliability. Over time, individual student's scores have remained reasonably stable.

Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies and percentages) were used to measure central tendencies and dispersion of the data. The differences in writing among Doc@Distance students were accessed using inferential statistics (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows™ Release 12.0 (2003) on a personal computer.

For Objective one, the graduate students' writing competencies in writing argument papers were analyzed and described by calculating frequencies and percentages of authenticated writing scores for Ending Cohort '04 and Beginning Cohort '07.

For Objective two, Doc@Distance students' writing abilities based on coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, source, and grammar were analyzed and described by calculating frequencies and percentages for Ending Cohort '04 and Beginning Cohort '07.

For Objective three, graduate students' authenticated writing scores were accessed for differences by calculating the mean and standard deviation.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study included the sample size and selection. The population was small and cannot be generalized outside the specific individuals in the

Doc@Distance Program. The study was a sample in time of the Doc@Distance Cohort. Readers are cautioned against generalizing these data and information to others than those included in this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The following section presents findings by objective.

Findings Related to Objective One

Objective one was to describe graduate students' competencies in writing argument papers. For this objective, the professional evaluators reached consensus on each student's score. The overall writing strength rubric was used to analyze students' writing.

For the Ending Cohort '04, no students (0.0%) demonstrated adequacy in writing competencies for argument papers; eleven students (68.8%) suggested adequacy, five students (31.3%) suggested inadequacy, and no students (0.0%) demonstrated inadequacy.

For the Beginning Cohort '07, one student (7.1%) demonstrated adequacy in writing competencies for an argument paper; three students (21.4%) suggested adequacy, 10 students (71.4%) suggested inadequacy, and no students (0/0%) demonstrated inadequacy. Table 1 shows the authenticated writing scores for Ending Cohort '04 and Beginning Cohort '07.

Table 1

Authenticated Writing Scores for Beginning and Ending Doc @ Distance Students (n=47)

	Total (n=47)		Cohort `04 Beginning (n=17)		Cohort `04 End (n=16)		Cohort `07 Beginning (n=14)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Demonstrates Adequacy	3	6.4	2	11.8	0	0	1	7.1
Suggests Adequacy	14	29.8	6	35.3	5	31.3	3	21.4
Suggests Inadequacy	27	57.4	6	35.3	11	68.8	10	71.4
Demonstrates Inadequacy	3	6.4	3	17.6	0	0	0	0
	47	100.0	17	100.0	16	100.0	14	100.0

Findings Related to Objective Two

Objective two was to describe Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities by specific competencies. Using the sentence-level structure assessment rubric, students' writing samples were assessed in six competency categories (coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, sources, and grammar) that contain numerous specific writing competencies.

Ending Cohort `04's writing abilities are explained below. Within the coherence category were three sub-categories (thesis, introduction, and body), each containing specific writing competencies.

Coherence – Thesis: Both evaluators found an unclear thesis in one paper (6.3%), and eight papers (50.0%) as having no problems relating to an unclear thesis. Both evaluators found 12 papers (75.0%) that contained no problems relating to missing theses. Both evaluators found 14 papers (87.5%) that did not contain other problems. Both evaluators found all 16 papers (100.0%) contained theses that created arguments.

Both of the evaluators found six papers (37.5%) that contained no significant problems.

Both evaluators found significant problems in five papers (31.3%) in the area of thesis.

Coherence – Introduction: Both evaluators found 13 (81.3%) of the 16 papers that did not contain over-generalized introductions. Both evaluators found 14 (87.5%) of the 16 papers that did not contain introductions that were trite. Both of the evaluators found 15 (93.8%) of the 16 papers that were not missing introductions. Both evaluators found 15 (93.8%) of the 16 papers that did not fail to introduce their topics. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that had a melodramatic introduction, and 14 papers (87.5%) that did not have melodramatic introductions. The evaluators found two papers (12.5%) that had other problems, and six papers (37.5%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found three papers (18.8%) that did not contain significant problems, and seven papers (43.8%) that contained significant problems with their introductions.

Coherence – Body: Both evaluators found three papers (18.8%) that exhibited paragraphs with weak transitions, and six papers (37.5%) that did not exhibit weak transitions between paragraphs. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that had a paragraph that lacked a topic sentence, and five papers (31.3%) that did not contain paragraphs that lacked topic sentences. Both evaluators found three papers (18.8%) that contained other problems, and eight papers (50.0%) that did not contain any other problems. Both evaluators found nine (56.3%) out of 16 papers that had significant problems in their bodies. Table 2 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to coherence and the sub-categories of thesis, introduction, and body. The

preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Coherence Competence (n=16)

Competence: Coherence	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Thesis</i>						
Unclear thesis	8	50.0	7	43.8	1	6.3
Thesis is missing	12	75.0	4	25.0	0	0.0
Other problems	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
Thesis makes no argument	16	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
No significant problems	5	31.3	5	31.3	6	37.5
<i>Introduction</i>						
Introduction overgeneralizes	13	81.3	3	18.8	0	0.0
Introduction is trite	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
Introduction missing	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Fails to introduce topic	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Introduction is melodramatic	14	87.5	1	6.3	1	6.3
Other problems	6	37.5	8	50.0	2	12.5
No significant problems	7	43.8	6	37.5	3	18.8
<i>Body</i>						
Paragraphs exhibit weak transitions	6	37.5	7	43.8	3	18.8
Paragraphs lack topic sentences	5	31.3	10	62.5	1	6.3
Other problems	8	50.0	5	31.3	3	18.8
No significant problems	9	56.3	7	43.8	0	0.0

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Audience Awareness: Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that used a tone that was too informal, and 12 papers (75.0%) that did not use informal tones. Both of the evaluators identified 14 papers (87.5%) that did not use hyperboles. Both evaluators

identified 14 (87.5%) of the 16 papers that did not have unvaried sentence structures. Both of the evaluators identified 15 (93.8%) of the 16 papers that did not make inappropriate appeals. Both evaluators found that 15 (93.8%) papers did not use sarcasm. Both evaluators found 15 (93.8%) papers that did not use a predominantly passive voice. Both evaluators found 13 papers (81.3%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators identified seven papers (43.8%) that had no significant problems, and both evaluators identified two papers (12.5%) that had significant problems. Table 3 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to audience awareness. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Audience Awareness Competence (n=16)

Competence: Audience Awareness	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Tone is too informal (slang, etc)	12	75.0	3	18.8	1	6.3
Hyperbolizes	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
Sentence structure unvaried	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
Makes inappropriate appeals	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Uses sarcasm	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Voice is predominantly passive	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Other problems	13	81.3	3	18.8	0	0.0
No significant problems	2	12.5	7	43.8	7	43.8

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Argument: Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that had an unsupported argument, and two papers (12.5%) that had supported arguments. Both evaluators found

five papers (31.5%) that rambled in their arguments, and six papers (37.5%) that did not ramble in their arguments. Both evaluators found two papers (12.5%) that had unclear arguments, and 10 papers (62.5%) that had clear arguments. Both evaluators found 11 papers (68.8%) did forecast points. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that did not have an argument, and 14 papers (87.5%) that did have arguments. Both evaluators found 15 papers (93.8%) that did not have illogical arguments. Both evaluators found two papers (12.5%) that contained other problems, and nine papers (56.3%) did not contain other problems. Both evaluators found that 12 papers (75.0%) contained significant problems in their arguments. Table 4 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to argument. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Argument Competence (n=16)

Competence: Argument	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Unsupported	2	12.5	13	81.3	1	6.3
Rambles	6	37.5	5	31.3	5	31.5
Unclear	10	62.5	4	25.0	2	12.5
Does not forecast points	11	68.8	5	31.3	0	0.0
Does not exist	14	87.5	1	6.3	1	6.3
Illogical	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Other problems	9	56.3	5	31.3	2	12.5
No significant problems	12	75.0	4	25.0	0	0.0

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Summary: Both evaluators found two papers (12.5%) that did not adequately develop summaries, and seven papers (43.8%) that did adequately develop summaries. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that overly developed or wrote a too detailed summary, and 11 papers (68.8%) that did not overly develop or write summaries that were too detailed. Both evaluators found that 14 (87.5%) out of 16 papers did not contain unclear summaries. Both evaluators found all 16 papers (100.0%) contained a summary. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that contained other problems, and nine papers (56.3%) that did not contain other problems. Both evaluators found two papers (12.5%) that did not contain any significant problems; 10 papers (62.5%) that contained significant problems with their summaries. Table 5 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to summary. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Summary Competence (n=16)

	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
Competence: Summary	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Not adequately developed	7	43.8	7	43.8	2	12.5
Overly developed/too detailed	11	68.8	4	25.0	1	6.3
Unclear	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
No Summary	16	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	9	56.3	6	37.5	1	6.3
No significant problems	10	62.5	4	25.0	2	12.5

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Sources: Both evaluators found 14 papers (87.5%) that did not over-introduce their sources. Both evaluators found that 15 papers (93.8%) did not misuse their sources. Both evaluators found that 15 papers (93.8%) did not cite sources incorrectly. Both evaluators agreed that all 16 papers (100.0%) correctly introduced their sources. Both evaluators agreed that all 16 papers (100.0%) did not plagiarize their writing. Both evaluators found 15 papers (93.8%) that did not contain other problems relating to sources. Both evaluators found 11 papers (68.8%) that did not contain significant problems, and one paper (6.3%) showed specific problems relating to sources. Table 6 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to sources. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Sources Competence (n=16)

Competence: Sources	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Over-introduced	14	87.5	2	12.5	0	0.0
Misused	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Cited incorrectly	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
Not introduced	16	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not cited/plagiarized	16	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	0.0
No significant problems	1	6.3	4	25.0	11	68.8

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Grammar: Both evaluators found five papers (31.3%) that had faulty sentence constructions, and four papers (25.0%) that did not have faulty sentence constructions.

Both evaluators found five papers (31.3%) that had punctuation errors, and seven papers (43.8%) that did not have punctuation errors. Both evaluators found eight papers (50.0%) that did not contain spelling errors. Both evaluators found that one paper (6.3%) had subject-verb agreement errors, and 10 papers (62.5%) did not contain subject-verb agreement errors. Both evaluators found 11 papers (68.8%) that did not contain pronoun-antecedent agreement errors. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that had other problems, and 14 papers (87.5%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found one paper (6.3%) that had no significant problems, and 10 papers (62.5%) that had significant problems in the area of grammar. Table 7 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to grammar. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Ending Cohort '04 Assessment on Grammar Competence (n=16)

Competence: Grammar	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Faulty sentence construction	4	25.0	7	43.8	5	31.3
Punctuation errors	7	43.8	4	25.0	5	31.3
Spelling errors	8	50.0	8	50.0	0	0.0
Subject-verb agreement errors	10	62.5	5	31.3	1	6.3
Pronoun-antecedent agreement errors	11	68.8	5	31.3	0	0.0
Other problems	14	87.5	1	6.3	1	6.3
No significant problems	10	62.5	5	31.3	1	6.3

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Beginning Cohort '07 graduate students' writing competencies are listed below. Within the coherence category were three sub-categories (thesis, introduction, and body), each containing specific writing competencies.

Coherence – Thesis: Both evaluators found six papers (42.9%) that did not have unclear theses. Both evaluators found seven papers (50.0%) that did not have missing theses. Both evaluators found 12 papers (85.7%) that contained a thesis that did make arguments. Both evaluators found 10 papers (71.4%) that did not contain other problems. Both evaluators found two papers (14.3%) that did not contain any significant problems with their theses, and nine papers (64.3%) that did contain significant problems in the sub-category of thesis.

Coherence – Introduction: Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that contained an over-generalized introduction, and nine papers (64.3%) that did not contain over-generalized introductions. Both evaluators found 11 papers (78.6%) that did not contain trite introductions. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that had a melodramatic introduction, and 12 papers (85.7%) that did not have a melodramatic introduction. Both evaluators found 13 papers (92.9%) did not fail to introduce topics. Both evaluators found 13 papers (92.9%) that did not have missing introductions. Both evaluators found six papers (42.9%) did not contain other problems. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that did not have significant problems with its introduction, and seven papers (50.0%) that had significant problems with their introductions.

Coherence – Body: Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that contained paragraphs that lacked topic sentences, and nine papers (64.3%) that did not contain paragraphs that lacked topic sentences. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that had paragraphs with weak transitions, and 10 papers (71.4%) that did not have paragraphs with weak transitions. Both evaluators found eight papers (57.1%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found that four papers (28.6%) had no significant problems with the bodies of the paper, and three papers (21.4%) that contained significant problems with the bodies. Table 8 shows specific student writing competencies with respect coherence and the sub-categories of thesis, introduction, and body. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Coherence Competence (n=14)

Competence: Coherence	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Thesis</i>						
Unclear thesis	6	42.9	8	57.1	0	0.0
Thesis is missing	7	50.0	7	50.0	0	0.0
Thesis makes no argument	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Other problems	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
No significant problems	9	64.3	3	21.4	2	14.3
<i>Introduction</i>						
Introduction overgeneralizes	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1
Introduction is trite	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
Introduction is melodramatic	12	85.7	1	7.1	1	7.1
Fails to introduce topic	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Introduction missing	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Other problems	6	42.9	8	57.1	0	0.0
No significant problems	7	50.0	6	42.9	1	7.1
<i>Body</i>						
Paragraphs lack topic sentences	9	64.3	4	28.6	1	7.1
Paragraphs exhibit weak transitions	10	71.4	3	21.4	1	7.1
Other problems	8	57.1	6	42.9	0	0.0
No significant problems	3	21.4	7	50.0	4	28.6

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Audience Awareness: Both evaluators agreed that 11 papers (78.6%) did not hyperbolize. Both evaluators agreed that 13 papers (92.9%) did not contain informal tones. Both evaluators agreed that all 14 papers (100.0%) did not make inappropriate appeals. Both evaluators also agreed that all 14 papers (100.0%) did not use sarcasm.

Both evaluators agreed that all 14 papers (100.0%) did not use predominantly passive voice. Both evaluators also agreed that all 14 papers (100.0%) did not have unvaried sentence structure. Both evaluators identified 12 papers (85.7%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators agreed that four papers (28.6%) did not contain any significant problems with audience awareness, and one paper (7.1%) that contained significant problems with audience awareness. Table 9 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to audience awareness. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Audience Awareness Competence (n=14)

Competence: Audience Awareness	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Hyperbolizes	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0
Tone is too informal (slang, etc)	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Makes inappropriate appeals	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Uses sarcasm	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Voice is predominantly passive	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sentence structure unvaried	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
No significant problems	1	7.1	9	64.3	4	28.6

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Argument: Both evaluators found two papers (14.3%) that had unsupported arguments, and eight papers (57.1%) that did not have unsupported arguments. Both evaluators found three papers (21.4%) that did not have arguments, and nine papers

(64.3%) that did have arguments. Both evaluators found that 12 papers (85.7%) did not have unclear arguments. Both evaluators found 12 papers (85.7%) that did not ramble. Both evaluators found that 13 papers (92.9%) did not contain illogical arguments. Both evaluators found that all 14 papers (100.0%) did forecast the points of their argument. Both evaluators found three papers (21.4%) that had other problems, and five papers (35.7%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators identified 11 papers (78.6%) that had significant problems with argument. Table 10 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to argument. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Argument Competence (n=14)

Competence: Argument	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Unsupported	8	57.1	4	28.6	2	14.3
Does not exist	9	64.3	2	14.3	3	21.4
Unclear	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Rambles	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Illogical	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Does not forecast points	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	5	35.7	6	42.9	3	21.4
No significant problems	11	78.6	3	21.4	0	0.0

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Summary: Both evaluators found four papers (28.6%) that had overly developed or too detailed summaries, and seven papers (50.0%) that did not have overly developed

or too detailed summaries. Both evaluators found 12 papers (85.7%) that did have adequately developed summaries. Both evaluators found 13 papers (92.9%) that did not have unclear summaries. Both evaluators found that all 14 papers (100.0%) did have summaries. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that contained other problems, and 11 papers (78.6%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found two papers (14.3%) that did not have any significant problems with their summaries, and nine papers (64.3%) that did have significant problems with their summaries. Table 11 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to summary. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Summary Competence (n=14)

Competence: Summary	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Overly developed/too detailed	7	50.0	3	21.4	4	28.6
Not adequately developed	12	85.7	1	7.1	1	7.1
Unclear	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
No Summary	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	11	78.6	2	14.3	1	7.1
No significant problems	9	64.3	3	21.4	2	14.3

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Sources: Both evaluators found nine papers (64.3%) that did not cite sources incorrectly. Both evaluators found 10 papers (71.4%) that did introduce sources. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that over-introduced sources, and 10 papers (71.4%)

that did not over-introduce sources. Both evaluators found 13 papers (92.9%) that did not misuse sources. Both evaluators found all 14 papers (100.0%) did not plagiarize. Both evaluators found 10 papers (71.4%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found three papers (21.4%) that did not have any significant problems with sources, and six papers (42.9%) that did have significant problems with sources. Table 12 shows specific student writing competencies with respect to sources. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Sources Competence (n=14)

Competence: Sources	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Cited incorrectly	9	64.3	5	35.7	0	0.0
Not introduced	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
Over introduced	10	71.4	3	21.4	1	7.1
Misused	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Not cited/plagiarized	14	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other problems	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
No significant problems	6	42.9	5	35.7	3	21.4

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

Grammar: Both evaluators found two papers (14.3%) that had faulty sentence constructions, and nine papers (64.3%) that did not have faulty sentence constructions. Both evaluators found 10 papers (71.4%) that did not have spelling errors. Both

evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that contained punctuation errors, and 11 papers (78.6%) that did not have punctuation errors. Both evaluators found 12 papers (85.7%) that did not have subject-verb agreement errors. Both evaluators found that 13 papers (92.9%) did not have pronoun-antecedent agreement errors. Both evaluators found one paper (7.1%) that had other problems, and 10 papers (71.4%) that did not have other problems. Both evaluators found three papers (21.4%) that did not have significant problems with grammar, and five papers (35.7%) that had significant problems with grammar. Table 13 show specific student-writing competencies with respect to grammar. The preceding analysis explained consensus; however, one evaluator may have disagreed with another evaluator and those frequencies are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Beginning Cohort '07 Assessment on Grammar Competence (n=14)

	Number of Professional Evaluators Who Identified Items					
	Neither		One		Both	
Competence: Grammar	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Faulty sentence construction	9	64.3	3	21.4	2	14.3
Spelling errors	10	71.4	4	28.6	0	0.0
Punctuation errors	11	78.6	2	14.3	1	7.1
Subject-verb agreement errors	12	85.7	2	14.3	0	0.0
Pronoun-antecedent agreement errors	13	92.9	1	7.1	0	0.0
Other problems	10	71.4	3	21.4	1	7.1
No significant problems	5	35.7	6	42.9	3	21.4

Note: Some percentages may add up to more or less than 100% because of rounding.

The primary reason for failure was examined for each Cohort. If a student has an overall score that suggested or demonstrated inadequacy, a primary reason for failure

was recorded. Examiners were required to reach a consensus. The primary reason for 10 (90.9%) of the 11 students from Ending Cohort `04 who failed was because of argument. One student (9.1%) failed because of poor grammar. The primary reason for nine (90.0%) of the 10 students that failed from Beginning Cohort `07 was argument. One student (10.0%) failed because of audience awareness. Table 14 shows the primary reason for failure.

Table 14

Beginning and Ending Doc @ Distance Students Primary Reason for Failure (n=47)

	Total (n=47)		Cohort `04 Beginning (n=17)		Cohort `04 End (n=16)		Cohort `07 Beginning (n=14)	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Argument	28	93.3	9	100.0	10	90.9	9	90.0
Grammar	1	3.3	0	0.0	1	9.1	0	0.0
Audience Awareness	1	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	10.0
	30	100.0	9	100.0	11	100.0	10	100.0

Note: 17 students either demonstrated adequacy or suggested adequacy.

Findings Related to Objective Three

Objective three was to assess the differences in graduate students' authenticated writing scores. Statistically and descriptively there is no difference found in the authenticated writing scores for Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07. Participants tended to suggest inadequacy overall.

A negligible effect size ($f=.06$) was found for all students ($M=2.36$).

Table 15 shows the authenticated writing scores compared by cohort.

Table 15

Comparison of Authenticated Writing Scores by Cohort (n=47)

Institution	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Cohort `04 New	17	2.41	0.94	.08	.92
Cohort `04 End	16	2.31	0.48		
Cohort `07 New	14	2.36	0.63		

Note: Scale 1=demonstrates inadequacy, 2=suggests inadequacy, 3=suggests adequacy, 4=demonstrates adequacy; $M=2.36$, $SD=.71$; A negligible effect size, $f=.06$ was calculated; $p>.05$

CHAPTER V

SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study, objectives for this study, summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the writing competencies of the students in the Doc@Distance program based on a six-competency scale for writing an argument paper. The specific objectives for this study were to:

1. Describe graduate students' competencies in writing an argument papers.
2. Describe Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities based on the following writing competencies: coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, source, and grammar.
3. Assess differences in graduate students' authenticated writing scores.

Summary of Findings

This section presents a summary of finding by objective based on a descriptive data analysis conducted by a third party, the Writing Programs Office at Texas A&M University.

Objective One

Objective One described students' competencies in writing argument papers by calculating the frequencies and percentages of participants' authenticated writing scores in ending Cohort `04 and beginning Cohort `07.

Key Findings

In Ending Cohort `04, five students (31.3%) suggested adequacy in their competencies in writing argument papers, and eleven students (68.8%) suggested inadequacy in competencies in writing argument papers. There were no students in Ending Cohort `04 who demonstrated adequacy or demonstrated inadequacy in their competencies in writing an argument paper.

For Beginning Cohort `07, one student (7.1%) demonstrated adequacy in competency in writing an argument paper; three students (21.4%) suggested inadequacy; and 10 students (71.4%) suggested inadequacy. No students demonstrated inadequacy in competencies in writing argument papers.

Conclusion One

It can be concluded that students in both Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07 did not demonstrate adequacy in their competencies in writing argument papers. The data show that a majority (more than 50%) of students in each cohort did not demonstrate adequacy in writing an argument paper.

Implications

Implications in this conclusion are that students in the Doc@Distance Program who are in the Ending Cohort `04 did not improve their authenticated writing scores after the completion of coursework. This is contrary to Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson's (1992) conclusion that students' writing skills will strengthen during their degree programs.

Implications in this conclusion indicate that students in the Doc@Distance Program who are in the Beginning Cohort `07 exhibited weak competencies in writing argument papers. Wright (1985) stated that students in graduate school have a tendency to be poor writers. This statement by Wright (1985) is supported by the results from both cohorts' writing scores.

Objective Two

Objective Two described the Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities for Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07 based on the following competencies: coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, sources, and grammar.

Key Findings

For Ending Cohort `04, eight students (50%) demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of coherence because of unclear theses; 10 students (62.6%) exhibited paragraphs with weak transitions in the bodies of their papers; 11 students (68.9%) wrote papers that contained paragraphs that lacked topic sentences in the bodies of their papers; and nine papers (56.3%) contained significant problems with the bodies of their papers.

Ending Cohort `04 demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of argument. Fourteen students' papers (87.6%) contained unsupported arguments; 10 papers (62.8%) contained rambling arguments; and 12 papers (75.0%) contained significant problems with their arguments.

Ending Cohort `04 papers exhibited weaknesses in the competency of summary. Nine papers (56.3%) contained summaries that were not adequately developed, and 10 papers (62.5%) contained significant problems.

For Ending Cohort `04, 12 papers (75.1%) demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of grammar because of faulty sentence structure; nine papers (56.3%) contained punctuation errors; eight papers (50%) contained spelling errors; and 10 papers (62.5%) contained significant problems with grammar.

For Beginning Cohort `07, students demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of coherence. Eight papers (57.1%) contained unclear theses; seven papers (50.0%) did not contain theses; nine papers (64.3%) contained significant problems with thesis; and seven papers (50.0%) had significant problems in introductions of their papers in the category of coherence.

Beginning Cohort `07 had 10 papers (71.4%) that demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of audience awareness by having significant problems.

Beginning Cohort `07 had 11 papers (78.6%) that exhibited weaknesses in the competency of argument because of significant problems.

Beginning Cohort `07 had seven papers (50.0%) that demonstrated weaknesses in the competency of summary because of overly developed or too detailed summaries, and nine papers (64.3%) contained significant problems relating to summary.

Beginning Cohort `07 had nine papers (64.3%) that contained significant problems in the competency of grammar.

Conclusion Two

It can be concluded that both Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07 exhibit extensive weaknesses in a majority of the six competency areas of writing an argument paper.

Implications

The frequencies and percentages that describe the Doc@Distance graduate students' writing abilities suggest that students are weak in several areas of writing an argument paper. Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002) discovered that students had the most difficulty with argument, coherence, grammar, summary, audience awareness, and sources. Recommendations were made to improve the writing competencies of agricultural education graduate students in these areas. Based on the scores of Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07, the recommendations were not enacted.

Objective Three

Objective Three was to describe the differences in graduate students' authenticated writing scores.

Key Findings

Statistically and descriptively, there was no difference in the authenticated writing scores for Ending Cohort `04 and Beginning Cohort `07. Participants tended to suggest inadequacy overall.

Conclusion Three

It can be concluded, based on the fact that Ending Cohort `04 has completed their coursework for the Doc@Distance Program and Beginning Cohort `07 has just started

the Doc@Distance Program, that the program does not offer students the ability to improve their writing competencies over the course of the program.

Implications

Implications of this conclusion are that after completing the coursework for the Doc@Distance Program, the students graduating from the program possess the same capabilities, or lack thereof, for writing argument papers as those who are just entering the program. Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson (1992) stated that writing skills of graduate students should strengthen throughout the duration of their degree program. However, according to the findings of this study, improvement after the completion of the degree program is not evident.

This study and these findings were an extension of a study conducted by Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002). This was a programmatic research effort to compare the similarities or differences in the findings of the Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002) study and the current situation. Recommendations made by Lindner, Murphy, and Wingenbach (2002) potentially did not have time to develop or occur due to time constraints.

Programmatic Implications

The following recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of this study.

1. This study found that Doc@Distance students did not suggest adequacy as a whole on their writing samples as determined by their authenticated writing scores at the beginning or ending of their four-year programs. Therefore, it is

recommended that the four-year degree plan implement more mandatory writing-intensive curricula for completion of the doctoral degree.

2. When the Cohort '04 began the degree program in the fall of 2000, the mean authenticated writing score for the cohort was 2.41 out of 4. At the end of Cohort '04 degree program, the mean authenticated writing score was 2.31 out of 4. Both scores demonstrate inadequacy in abilities to write argument papers. Therefore, it is recommended that a writing-intensive course be offered at the beginning of the degree program and at the end of the degree program. All of the courses offered between the first and last year should emphasize coherence, audience awareness, argument, summary, sources, and grammar when grading argument papers.
3. Students enter this program with inadequate argument-writing abilities. This study concluded that students leave this program with inadequate argument-writing abilities. It is recommended that the admissions requirements for the Doc@Distance Program mandate a required writing sample essay as part of the application process. This writing sample should be evaluated by the Writing Programs Office at Texas A&M University to ensure consistency and reliability in the evaluations of writing samples.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Based on the findings of this study the following research recommendations were proposed:

1. Cohort `07 and Cohort `10 demonstrate their writing abilities in other areas such as data reports, narratives, and informative and research analyses. These writing samples will be scored using rubrics appropriate for each area at the Writing Programs Office at Texas A&M University.
2. A follow-up study be conducted on Cohort `07 after two years of completed coursework to determine if writing abilities have changed.
3. A final study be conducted on Cohort `07 at the beginning of the fourth year to determine if writing abilities have changed over the course of four years. These findings could be compared to the beginning findings and to findings from the study conducted after two years of completed coursework.
4. A study be conducted on Beginning Cohort `10 to determine writing abilities.
5. A study be conducted to compare Ending Cohort `07 to Beginning Cohort `10 to compare the ending authenticated writing scores.
6. Evaluate undergraduate seniors in the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University using the same authenticated writing score rubric to determine if writing inability exists at the undergraduate level.
7. A study be conducted to compare on-campus agricultural education graduate students at Texas A&M University to distance education agricultural education graduate students at Texas A&M University.

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APPENDIX A
PRO & CON ARTICLES

Tenure and Institutional Viability: To Revise or Not to Revise

This article was originally printed in *The Montgomery Advertiser*, April 20, 1997.
<http://www.auburn.edu/administration/horizon/procon.html>

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CON

The question of whether to maintain tenure is of critical new importance in an era of university downsizing.

Is academic tenure simply featherbedding? Is it welfare for the well educated? Is the system necessary to maintain academic freedom or free speech?

Indeed, is the whole public university structure as it has expanded and evolved over the past century, including tenure, to become an historical artifact in a rapidly moving high-tech age?

Tenure protects faculty jobs in colleges and universities. After an "apprentice" period of about six years, lifetime employment (not work) is virtually guaranteed with little or no regulation in the academic workplace.

University management is left with little flexibility to shift resources in order to meet changing market conditions.

Cost escalation in higher education, rivaled only by the health care industry, can be attributed, at least in part, to the production inefficiencies engendered by the tenure system.

If costs continue to escalate, a baby born today can expect to pay more than \$180,000 for a college degree.

Teacher's unions such as the American Association of University Professors typically invoke free speech or "academic freedom" in defense of tenure. But in reality academic

freedom in its critical manifestation of free speech has been fought almost exclusively in the courts and not in, or by, the professorial union.

As federal courts repeatedly have made clear, all First Amendment rights do not end at the schoolhouse door. The same laws respecting all kinds of discrimination and speech in all other activities are enhanced when applied to universities.

The American tenure system is not, as commonly thought, of classical or medieval origins, but was born of a liberal academic establishment during the Progressive era early in this century. That emphasis continues today as the academic establishment remains most eager to defend free speech and academic freedom only if it comes from the left side of the political spectrum.

In this new venue, conservative, classical liberal, and libertarian speech is "politically incorrect," often labeled racist or sexist, and sometimes even banned by speech and behavior codes.

The tenure system is undergoing both internal and external changes that signal its ultimate irrelevance. On many campuses internal corruption and politics all but guarantee that the best and the brightest do not make the cut. At higher quality public and private institutions, a tradition of faculty governance prevails in granting tenure.

In this system, no longer insisted upon by the AAUP, those closest and most qualified to judge qualifications of tenure candidates are entrusted with the important decision to award the lifetime contract.

But university administrators at lower quality schools, seeking a quiet, litigation-free life, hide behind "oversight" committees, peopled by faculty who have little or no expertise in the candidate's field, and are unable to judge his or her qualifications and accomplishments.

Pages of unread academic "research," often little noticed even within the candidate's field, are toted up to justify up-or-out decisions and faculty promotions.

Often campus politics counts as much or more than any research or teaching credentials offered by the candidate. The result in many college and university venues is academia in administrative anarchy and, with it, sadly declining quality in education -- ironically, the very outcomes that tenure is intended to prevent.

The real nail in tenure's coffin is, however, external in nature. Technology and free-market competition are also critical factors in the future structure of universities. Delivery of educational resources is already undergoing dramatic changes.

You may now "take courses" by computer at Harvard, Oxford, or Athens universities. New studies reveal that there are far better means of delivering purely technical education than the traditional classroom production model.

A recent study by the National Association of Scholars reveals that universities are not delivering the liberal-classical education very well either.

Also there is market competition. On 13 campuses from Atlanta to Los Angeles, a private enterprise company called the DeVry Institute of Technology delivers the latest in computer-driven technical education at lower cost and more efficiently than most state and federal training programs.

The tenure system is in for a hard time as technology, higher costs and declining traditional university enrollments proceed apace.

The Japanese are experimenting with a system of contracting between universities and faculty in order to provide academic resources. Contracting periods will vary, but they are not for lifetime terms.

Faculty at Florida Gulf Coast University and at Arizona International Campus, a small state school, are being offered multi-year contracts. Flexible rules regarding faculty allocations, while "protecting free speech," are being suggested by a governor's commission in Oklahoma.

Texas adopted a post-tenure review system for fall 1997. And last year the mammoth university system of Minnesota adopted a system for post-tenure "pay cuts."

Ironically, market wage rates for faculty may in many cases be higher without tenure. As in all free exchange, the only power parties have is the power of an alternative. When that alternative is work in the private sector (with no lifetime tenure), universities may have to cough up higher pay.

Just as auto and textile unions are declining in the face of inevitable international competition and high technology, academic markets will also be forced to adjust. The college or university will not disappear, but will undergo radical restructuring in the 21st century.

In this world, lifetime tenure will become incompatible with academic progress.

Cyrus B. Dawsey
Professor
Department of Geography
Auburn University

PRO

Tenure is again under assault. During difficult times, academic tenure, a concept that many of us believe to be fundamental to the success of universities in the United States, becomes a scapegoat for all the ills plaguing higher education. The fact is that tenure, and the academic freedom that it allows, may be the single most important virtue of a system handicapped by other constraints.

Faculty members in tenure-track positions must undergo a 5 to 7 year probationary period after which their credentials are reviewed thoroughly by their peers. Once granted, tenure is not a guarantee of lifetime job security. Procedures for terminating a tenured faculty member (for "adequate cause") are carefully spelled out in the Auburn University Faculty Handbook. All faculty undergo regular annual reviews, and the entire institution is reviewed for accreditation once every ten years. The process of review is itself reviewed, and the mechanisms for triggering dismissal procedures are constantly being refined and clarified.

Tenure pertains to the retention of quality faculty, and it has been stated that the faculty are the heart of any university. A fundamental question, therefore, centers on the definition of a university. Is the appropriate model that of an industrial plant where raw material (untrained youth) goes in one end and a finished product (employable adults) exits four years later? Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), students are not widgets, and "education" cannot be reduced to a handful of training skills. Each student is a unique individual who undergoes a life-marking experience that helps him/her to achieve levels of personal and career development that would not be possible otherwise. Professionals with special skills and commitment are needed to promote such growth, and it must be done in an atmosphere that is open and conducive to experimentation and free inquiry.

Another important responsibility of a university faculty member is to make genuine contributions to the advancement of knowledge. Similarly, assessment of the merit of those contributions cannot be performed adequately by ordinary citizens. Just as a physician's medical skills must be evaluated by other physicians, the contributions of professional educators and researchers are best reviewed by their peers.

Finally, it has also become fashionable to compare universities to businesses, as if a university such as Auburn were an educational store. The ultimate indicator of success would be happy customers. As with the industrial model, however, the analogy is

flawed. Many students would be very content to spend 4 years attending social functions and sports events in the "loveliest village of the Plains." The value of a genuine college education, the habits developed under the demands of Horrible Professor X who "pushed me beyond what I thought I was capable of," is often not evident until many years after the time spent on campus.

Tenure provides a measure of protection, therefore, for committed professionals who engage in an activity that can be hard to measure and is often unappreciated by the beneficiaries. But who would deny the impact of a good college professor? Without a tenure system, these professionals would become easy targets, and the effect on discourse would be stifling. Universities are places where stimulating and competing ideas flow freely, propounded by individuals with widely differing opinions. And tenure makes it all possible.

Universities function poorly in environments that are not protected from the whims and vagaries of outside forces trying to enforce intellectual conformity. Academic freedom is a necessity, and it involves protection that runs deeper than the guarantee of free speech provided by the Constitution. The freedom characteristic of American institutions of higher education would not be possible in a system without tenure. While this country's international competitive position has waned in many fields, our university system has remained strong, as measured by the demand for admission from foreign citizens. One of the fundamental reasons for this strength has been our willingness to preserve the system of academic tenure.

APPENDIX B
ARGUMENT WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

The Pros and Cons of Tenure

The following debate over tenure and institutional viability appears in the *The Montgomery Advertiser*, April 20, 1997. [Online]. Available on-line <http://www.auburn.edu/administration/horizon/procon.html>

Your assignment is to write a well-formed, grammatically correct essay based on your reading of the two positions. You have *1½ hours* to complete this assignment. Please use the “bluebooks” provided and follow the guidelines provided below. Manage your time wisely and *allow time* to reflect and review.

Your essay should take the form of an argument. An argument is about an issue with important consequences for both the author and the audience. The argument *presents a position* on the issue. On the issue of the role of change agencies, for example you could argue for or against centralized control of programming, or you could take a position somewhere in between. A position must be supported with *factual information* (statistics, examples, or other evidence) and/or with general principles and theories. For your argument to be effective, you must convince the reader that your facts are authoritative and that your principles are acceptable.

You audience is other university graduate students. These students are interested in the issue, but have not read the articles. Remember that this is a well-educated, diverse group of readers. They may not share your background and personal biases. You will need to write logically and give good reasons for each point you make.

Your essay should begin with an overview. The overview should address the issues presented in the two articles. Then you should briefly summarize the position of each article. Finally, you should present your own position, supporting it with information and ideas taken from the articles or from other readings or personal experience. You may side with one of the articles, or you may take a third position, one which differs altogether from the positions of the articles or which draws upon both.

Referencing the articles. Your references in the essay to the articles (paraphrases, summaries, and direct quotations) should follow APA documentation. A separate reference page and full citations are not necessary.

Proofread and correct your paper before you turn it in. Write or print legibly, double space your essay, use blue or black ink or pencil, and write on one side of the page only.

APPENDIX C
APA DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

*APA Documentation Guidelines***Reference Citations.**

Rogers (1994) compared...
...reaction time (Rogers, 1994).
In 1994 Rogers compared...

Within a paragraph, you need not include the year in subsequent references to a study as long as the study cannot be confused with other studies cited in the article.

Quotes.

For a direct quotation give the author, year, and page number in parentheses.

Rogers (1995) stated, "Early adopters have greater intelligence than later adopters" (p. 274).

"Early adopters have greater intelligence than later adopters" (Rogers, 1995, p. 274).

Quotations of 40 or more words should be indented and quotation marks should not be used.

Rogers (1995) poses the following:

Is there on set of all-purpose opinion leaders in a system, or are there different opinion leaders for different issues? Polymorphism is the degree to which an individual acts as n opinion leader for a variety of topics. Its opposite, monomorphism, is the degree to which an individual acts as an opinion leader for only a single topic (p. 293).

Is there on set of all-purpose opinion leaders in a system, or are there different opinion leaders for different issues? Polymorphism is the degree to which an individual acts as an opinion leader for a variety of topics. Its opposite, monomorphism, is the degree to which an individual acts as an opinion leader for only a single topic (Rogers, 1995, p. 293).

APPENDIX D

RUBRIC

Rubric

Score of 4	Score of 3	Score of 2	Score of 1
Draft demonstrates adequacy	Draft suggests adequacy	Draft suggests inadequacy	Draft demonstrates inadequacy
Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coherent Effective organization; thesis suggests writer's purpose• Effective audience analysis• Clearly argumentative; writer offers good support of thesis• Summarizes effectively• Incorporates sources effectively• Few distracting surface errors	Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coherent Clear thesis; effective intro and conclusion; effective transitions• Demonstrates audience awareness• Writer develops an adequate argument; uses logical appeal• Summarizes adequately• Incorporates sources adequately• Includes surface errors expected in a draft (spelling, word confusion, s-v agreement, punctuation, weak pronoun reference)	Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay rambles; lacks a thesis; lacks transitions• Does not demonstrate audience awareness• Writer does not demonstrate understanding of logical appeal• Failure to summarize; essay is mostly summary• Obscure references to sources• Includes errors that confuse the reader (faulty sentence structure, ambiguous pronoun reference, garbled sentences)	Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lacks coherence; no thesis; does not address assignment• Shows no awareness of audience/ rhetorical situation• Essay does not develop an argument• Essay is summary only• Does not use sources• Includes errors that confuse the reader (faulty sentence structure, ambiguous pronoun reference, garbled sentences)

APPENDIX E
GRADE SHEET

Appendix B - 18

Student Name _____
 Student ID _____
 Exam Score _____
 SAT Score (verbal) _____

Grader _____
 Date _____

COHERENCE**Thesis**

1. Unclear thesis _____
2. Thesis makes no argument _____
3. Thesis is missing _____
4. Other problems (describe) _____
5. No significant problems _____

Introduction

6. Fails to introduce topic _____
7. Introduction missing _____
8. Introduction overgeneralizes _____
9. Introduction is melodramatic _____
10. Intro is trite/Begins with, "In today's society" _____
11. Other problems (describe) _____
12. No significant problems _____

Body

13. Paragraphs exhibit weak transitions _____
14. Paragraphs lack topic sentences _____
15. Other problems (describe) _____
16. No significant problems _____

AUDIENCE AWARENESS

17. Makes inappropriate appeals _____
18. Uses sarcasm _____
19. Hyperbolizes _____
20. Voice is predominantly passive _____
21. Sentence structure unvaried _____
22. Tone is too informal (slang, etc.) _____
23. Other problems (describe) _____
24. No significant problems _____

If exam received a failing grade, then indicate the **PRIMARY** reason for failure by circling **ONE** of the following:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| 53. Thesis Coherence | 56. Audience Awareness | 59. Sources |
| 54. Introduction Coherence | 57. Argument | 60. Grammar |
| 55. Body Coherence | 58. Summary | |

ARGUMENT

25. Illogical _____
26. Unsupported _____
27. Unclear _____
28. Does not exist _____
29. Does not forecast points _____
30. Rambles _____
31. Other problems (describe) _____
32. No significant problems _____

SUMMARY

33. Unclear _____
34. Not adequately developed _____
35. Overly developed/too detailed _____
36. No summary _____
37. Other problems (describe) _____
38. No significant problems _____

SOURCES

39. Not introduced _____
40. Over-introduced _____
41. Misused _____
42. Cited incorrectly _____
43. Not cited/plagiarized _____
44. Other problems (describe) _____
45. No significant problems _____

GRAMMAR

46. Spelling errors _____
47. S-V agreement errors _____
48. Pronoun-antecedent agree. errors _____
49. Punctuation errors _____
50. Faulty sentence construction _____
51. Other problems (describe) _____
52. No significant problems _____

APPENDIX F
IRB APPROVAL

Revised December 15, 2003

**Texas A&M University
IRB Amendment Form
Protocol for Human Subjects in Research**

Principal Investigator Name James B. Lindner Faculty Staff Graduate Student Undergraduate Student
 Department AGED Mail Stop 2116 Phone 458-2701
 Email _____ Fax _____

Co-Principal Investigator Name _____ Faculty Staff Graduate Student Undergraduate Student
 Department _____ Mail Stop _____ Phone _____
 Email _____ Fax _____

Graduate Committee Chair/Faculty Advisor Name (if student) _____
 Department _____ Mail Stop _____ Phone _____
 Email _____ Fax _____

IRB PROTOCOL # 2003-0555
 Project Title _____

Authenticated writing assessments of agricultural education graduate students

Funding Agency _____

Funding Administrator: RF TAES TEES TAMU TTI

1. Description of Changes to the Protocol (check all that apply):

- a. Revision to protocol format _____
 b. Revision to consent document _____
 c. Other Adding student to project _____

2. Has the level of risk to the participant increased? Yes No

3. If yes, please describe

4. Describe request for revision:

Adding graduate student to the project. Her thesis will come from data generated from this project. See pg 743 for name of student.

5. Attach revised protocol and/or consent documents as applicable (make sure all changes are highlighted and/or in bold type)

Signature of PI: James B. Lindner Date: 1.28.04

Typed Name: James B. Lindner E-mail: j.lindner@tamu.edu

Signature of Faculty Advisor (if student): _____ Date: _____

Typed Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Signature of Department Head: Glen C. Shinn Date: _____

Typed Name: GLEN C. SHINN E-mail: g-shinn@tamu.edu

The information provided will be reviewed and approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Participants in Research for compliance with federal regulations for continuing review and the University's Institutional Federal Wide Assurance document approved by OHRP.

VITA

Candidate: Kimberly Dawn Wright

Address: P.O. Box 113
Penelope, Texas 76676

Degree: Master of Science

Thesis Title: Authenticated Writing Assessment of Agricultural Education
Graduate Students

Biographical: Born October 16, 1980, Waco, Texas to Steve and Rita Wright

Education: Penelope High School, 1999
B.S., Agricultural Economics
Texas A&M University, 2003
M.S., Agricultural Education
Texas A&M University, 2004

Professional: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Agricultural
Education, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
September 2003 – Present

Community Relations Intern, Synagro, Inc.
Houston, Texas
June 2003 – August 2003

Student Worker, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life
Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
April 2001 – May 2003

Student Worker, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station – Payroll
Department, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
August 2000 – April 2001