

This report provides the local validation of the ESL Writing Sample. Supporting evidence in the areas of cut-score validity and disproportionate impact over a six-year period (Spring 2008 to Fall 2013) are provided as requirements for the re-validation of this assessment test. Also a content validity study was conducted in Spring 2014.

### ESL Writing Sample Process

The ESL Writing Sample is a locally-developed essay test used to place students into the appropriate ESL writing course. Students are placed into one of four levels, depending on their holistic scale of 1 to 5.

Rating	Placement	Course Description
1	53A or lower	ESL 53A OK, but Adult School ESL course recommended
2	ESL-53A	ESL 53A: Elementary Writing and Grammar
3	ESL-53B	ESL 53B: Intermediate Writing and Grammar
4	ESL-53C	ESL 53C: Advanced Writing and Grammar
5	ENGL-1A	English 1A: Reading and Composition

### Content Validity

In March 2014, ECC ESL faculty members, both full-time and adjunct, participated in a two-hour ESL essay placement test rubric and writing samples review. Participating members were experienced faculty (10 to 30 years of experience) and had taught most, if not all levels of writing courses.

Faculty discussed the rubric which originally was modeled according to course objectives and course content, then checked for a correlation between course descriptions and rubric level descriptions. Faculty shared their observations of the students taking writing courses during Spring 2014.

Faculty felt that the rubric is well-structured and see it as a successful assessment tool determining the writing skill level of matriculating students.

Rating	Course Description	Comments
1	ESL 53A OK, but Adult School ESL course recommended	Fine. Fair.
2	ESL 53A: Elementary Writing and Grammar	Works well.
3	ESL 53B: Intermediate Writing and Grammar	Fine. Fair. Perfectly placed. Self-explanatory.
4	ESL 53C: Advanced Writing and Grammar	Works well. Placements are accurate.
5	English 1A: Reading and Composition.	Fair. Accurate. Perfect.

The readers involved in the testing annually participate in norming sessions (reading and scoring of writing samples) which in turn produce an effective placement process into El Camino College ESL writing classes.

### Cut Score Analysis

From Spring 2008 to Fall 2013, 4,466 students took the ESL Writing Sample. Of these students, 2,676 enrolled in an ESL writing course at the level into which the assessment tool placed them. To determine whether or not cut scores continue to be set at appropriate levels, success rates in each course were calculated. These rates were calculated for the first ESL course in which examinees enrolled following the placement test.

Course	N	Success Rate*
ESL-53A	804	78.2%
ESL-53B	1,412	88.5%
ESL-53C	338	87.0%
ENGL-1A	121	90.1%

*\* Success rate is defined as the percentage of students earning an A, B, C or CR grade out of all students enrolled in the course.*

In addition to success rates, faculty ratings of student ability were used to measure if students were placed appropriately in ESL writing courses. In Spring 2014, faculty who taught ESL writing courses were asked whether or not each student in their class entered with the basic skills and knowledge to be successful in their course. The majority of ESL writing students were rated to be placed at an appropriate level.

#### Faculty Ratings-Spring 2014

	ESL 53A (n=57)	ESL 53B (n=72)	ESL 53C (n=75)	Engl 1A (n=34)
<b>Appropriately Placed</b>	93%	96%	89%	94%
<b>Should Be Placed Higher</b>	4%	3%	4%	0%
<b>Should Be Placed Lower</b>	3%	1%	7%	6%

Students were also asked to rate whether they were appropriately placed into the ESL writing course they were enrolled in. Approximately 80% of students indicated that they were placed in the right course.

## Student Ratings-Spring 2014

	ESL 53A (n=45)	ESL 53B (n=116)	ESL 53C (n=143)	Engl 1A (n=48)
<b>Appropriately Placed</b>	78%	81%	89%	85%
<b>Should Be Placed Higher</b>	13%	16%	10%	9%
<b>Should Be Placed Lower</b>	9%	3%	1%	6%

Based on the high success rates, student and faculty ratings, the cut scores appear to be set to the appropriate level.

### Disproportionate Impact

The following analysis examines whether results from the ESL Writing Sample exhibit potential disproportionate impact on students based on their gender, ethnicity, age, disability or primary language. For each of these categories, subgroups are compared to a minimum standard to determine whether certain subgroups do not meet the standard. The standard is defined as 80% of a given placement rate. The reference rate used in this analysis is the average placement rates for a course. Subgroups with placement rates below the 80% standard are highlighted.

#### Gender

The data reveal no evidence of disproportionate impact based on gender.

Gender	ESL 53A		ESL 53B		ESL 53C		Engl 1A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Females</b>	746	33.2	1112	49.4	306	13.6	86	3.8	2,250	100
<b>Males</b>	588	35.7	814	49.4	178	10.8	68	4.1	1,648	100
<b>Total/Average Rate</b>	1,334	34.2	1,926	49.4	484	12.4	154	4.0	3,898	100
<b>80% of Average Rate</b>	<b>27.4</b>		<b>39.5</b>		<b>9.9</b>		<b>3.2</b>			

#### Age Group

The data reveal disproportionate impact in the older age groups. Students ages 25 to 29 and 40 and over placed lower than expected into the English Reading and Comprehension course (Engl 1A). Also, students 30 years old and older placed lower than expected into the Advanced Writing and Grammar course (ESL 53C).

It is possible that the older age groups more commonly represent recent immigrants without a great amount of formal schooling. Data on length of time in the U.S. will be collected in the future to determine if this factor explains the apparent disproportionate impact on older students.

Age Group	ESL 53A		ESL 53B		ESL 53C		Engl 1A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
17 to 19	217	24.0	492	54.5	146	16.2	48	5.3	903	100
20 to 24	372	31.0	624	52.0	150	12.5	54	4.5	1,200	100
25 to 29	178	33.3	264	49.4	76	14.2	16	3.0	534	100
30 to 39	278	39.9	332	47.7	62	8.9	24	3.4	696	100
40 and over	288	52.7	209	38.2	38	6.9	12	2.2	547	100
<b>Total/Average Rate</b>	1,333	34.4	1,921	49.5	472	12.2	154	4.0	3,880	100
<b>80% of Average Rate</b>	<b>27.5</b>		<b>39.6</b>		<b>9.7</b>		<b>3.2</b>			

### Disability

The data reveal no disproportionate impact on students with disabilities. However, the number of students with disabilities is too small to draw definite conclusions. The disability category will be monitored until a sample of disabled students of sufficient size forms.

Disability	ESL 53A		ESL 53B		ESL 53C		ENGL 1A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	17	44.7	18	47.4	*	2.6	*	5.3	38	100
No	1,318	34.1	1,911	49.5	483	12.5	152	3.9	3,864	100
<b>Total/Average Rate</b>	1,335	34.2	1,929	49.4	484	12.4	154	3.9	3,902	
<b>80% of Average Rate</b>	<b>27.4</b>		<b>39.5</b>		<b>9.9</b>		<b>3.2</b>			

\*Cell size less than 10.

### Ethnicity

The data reveal evidence of disproportionate impact for Latino students who placed lower than expected into the Reading and Composition (Engl 1A) and placed higher than expected into Elementary Writing and Grammar course (ESL 53A). On the other hand, Asian students placed higher than expected into Intermediate Writing and Grammar course (ESL 53B).

The lower placement Latino student population is most likely the result of students not have similar academic preparation in English as Asian students come predominantly from language schools and academies. Nonetheless, these results will be examined more closely to determine if any unintended biases exist in the test prompts or scoring process that may influence outcomes.

Ethnicity	ESL 53A		ESL 53B		ESL 53C		Engl 1A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
African	39	34.5	49	43.4	21	18.6	4	3.5	113	100
Asian/Pacific Islander	775	31.2	1,298	52.3	306	12.3	103	4.1	2,482	100
Latino	346	40.9	389	45.9	88	10.4	24	2.8	847	100
White	141	39.4	143	39.9	54	15.1	20	5.6	358	100
Other or Unknown	27	36.5	33	44.6	*	17.6	*	1.4	74	100
<b>Total/Average Rate</b>	1,335	34.3	1,925	49.4	482	12.4	152	3.9	3,874	100
<b>80% of Average Rate</b>	<b>27.4</b>		<b>39.5</b>		<b>9.9</b>		<b>3.1</b>			

\*Cell size less than 10.

### Primary Language

Only languages with total numbers of 60 or more were included in this analysis in order to ensure sufficient sample sizes in most placement categories. The data suggest modest disproportionate impact for speakers of Japanese and Korean who placed slightly lower in the course series than then expected with fewer placing into Advanced Writing and Grammar (ESL 53C) and more placed into Intermediate Writing and Grammar course (ESL 53B).

The varying rates of placement by language spoken may be related to length of time in US with groups that are in the US for a longer period advantaged to perform better on the test. Information on date of first arrival in the US could help clarify the impact on students with different language backgrounds.

Language	ESL 53A		ESL 53B		ESL 53C		Engl 1A		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Chinese	105	27.5	204	53.4	58	15.2	15	3.9	382	100
English	369	29.3	643	51.1	196	15.6	50	4.0	1,258	100
Japanese	85	24.8	210	61.2	34	9.9	14	4.1	343	100
Korean	114	32.5	189	53.8	34	9.7	14	4.0	351	100
Spanish	35	42.7	34	41.5	10	12.2	3	3.7	82	100
Vietnamese	25	22.7	61	55.5	17	15.5	7	6.4	110	100
Other	454	42.0	486	45.0	103	9.5	38	3.5	1,081	100
<b>Total/Average Rate</b>	1,187	32.9	1,827	50.7	452	12.5	141	3.9	3,607	
<b>80% of Average Rate</b>	<b>26.3</b>		<b>40.5</b>		<b>10.0</b>		<b>3.1</b>			

## **CONCLUSION**

This study was conducted to re-validate the use of the ESL Writing Sample assessment test. It evaluates the continuing appropriateness of test content, established cut scores and disproportionate impact. The cut scores appear to be set at the appropriate level for the ESL writing courses based on students' high success rates and high agreement among ESL faculty and students that the assessment placed students at the appropriate level. In addition, ESL faculty evaluators agreed that the scoring rubric placed students at the appropriate levels. However, there is evidence of some disproportionate impact based on age, ethnicity and primary language. The possibility of negative impacts will be explored further through additional analyses of students' academic preparedness and length of time in the United States.