

Assessment #7: PRAXIS II Essay Test

1. Assessment Description:

The PRAXIS II Essay Test consists of four essay questions that candidates must complete in two hours. The English Department tracks students' scores on this test very carefully because we see it as a reflection of our success in teaching our students to write. While we have respect for the composing process and the essential role revision plays in writing well, we also believe that English teachers ought to be able to write well spontaneously and to have enough grasp of sentence structure and grammar to do so in a way that demonstrates their control of language. This skill is crucial for making comments on student papers, answering emails from parents, or communicating with administrators and colleagues. In addition, an on-the-spot writing assignment has become part of some job interviews for teachers.

We are also in the process of comparing these test results with our own assessment of the writing of entering students in ENG 209, the introduction to the major course. We intend to isolate the scores for English Education students so that we can track their writing progress and compare it to their success rate on the PRAXIS.

2. Standards Met:

This test aligns with **Standard 3.1.7** concerning students' knowledge of grammar and with **Standard 3.5** concerning students' understanding and knowledge of literature. However, the English Department uses it to monitor **Standard 3.4** concerning composing effectively for a specific audience.

3. Data Findings:

Our success rate for the essay portion of the PRAXIS has not been as high or consistent as we would like for it to be. While we are close to achieving an 80% pass rate over the last three years and hit at least 80% in three of the five years for which we have data, our scores have ranged from 50-100%. While most of our students meet the standards in most years, we will continue to strive to prepare students to pass these tests and to gain confidence in their ability to write spontaneously. Because students have reached an 89% pass rate on the content portion of PRAXIS II, we assume the difficulty is with writing. The Methods instructor also plans to do practice essay exams in her course as she does now for the multiple choice part of PRAXIS II.

4. Evidence for Meeting Standards:

Most students do pass this exam and therefore demonstrate their ability to read, analyze, and interpret literature; to use their knowledge of grammar; and to write well, meeting **Standards 3.5, 3.1.7, and 3.4.**

5. Assessment Tool:

The test consists of four essay questions. The ETS website (www.ets.org/praxi) describes these as:

- One literature question that asks examinees to interpret a work of poetry
- One literature question that asks examinees to interpret a work of prose

- One issue question that asks examinees to evaluate the argument and rhetorical features of a passage that addresses an issue in the study of English
- One issue question that asks examinees to take and defend a position on an issue in the study of English, using references to works of literature

ETS Rubric:

The score range is 3 to 0.

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- Analyzes the specified literary elements in the selection accurately and with some depth
- Shows a sound understanding of the selection
- Supports points with appropriate examples from the selection and explains how the examples support those points
- Is coherent and demonstrates control of language, including diction and syntax
- Demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English

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- Analyzes the specified literary elements in the selection with overall accuracy but may overlook or misinterpret some elements
- Demonstrates understanding of the selection but may contain some misreadings
- Supports points with appropriate examples from the selection but may fail to explain how the examples support those points
- Is coherent and demonstrates control of language, including diction and syntax
- Displays control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some flaws

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- The response demonstrates some ability to engage with the selection but is flawed in one or more of the following ways:
- Incorrectly identifies literary elements in the selection or provides a superficial analysis of those elements
- Demonstrates an insufficient or inaccurate understanding of the selection
- Fails to support points with appropriate examples from the selection
- Lacks coherence or has serious problems with the control of language, including diction and syntax
- Contains serious and persistent writing errors

PRAXIS II Data 1999-2005

Year	Content Area	Test	Completers	Passing	Pass Rate
1999-2000	English				
		Essays			83.33%
2000-01	English				
		Essays			60%
2001-02	English				
		Essays	12	10	83.33%
2002-03	English				
		Essays			100%
2003-04	English				
		Essays			50%
2004-05	English				
		Essays			80%
3-Year		Essays			77%