Evaluation of an Academic Writing Program – A Case of Canadian Mennonite University

by

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Abstract

Academic writing programs are one way universities seek to increase the academic achievement of first-year students and decrease attrition. This paper examines data from an evaluation of a first-year academic writing program at Canadian Mennonite University. The original program evaluation was conducted to determine student attitudes toward the program and whether the academic writing lab program increased students' writing abilities. This thesis goes further by examining relationships between affective outcomes (motivation, self-regulatory ability, perceived writing ability), writing ability, and cumulative grade point average. Data was collected using student surveys and writing samples. The results indicated that academic attainment was positively correlated with: writing ability, motivation, and self-regulation. Motivation and self-regulation, but not perceived writing ability, correlated with actual writing ability. Participation in the Academic Writing Lab did not affect student affective characteristics. However, student writing ability did improve which indicates that even a small program can improve students' writing skills.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My role as Assistant Registrar at Canadian Mennonite University allows for frequent contact with first-year and returning students. In addition to the many administrative roles I perform for students, I am sometimes in a position to hear complaints and concerns students bring to the Registrar's office. Undoubtedly, some of these complaints are related to programming.

This situation is not unique to my office or my institution. Every year universities offer student programming related to academics, student life, and student success. The goal of each program is to provide a service to students. What is not always clear is whether the programs are performing as intended: achieving the specified goals and servings to the intended population. Universities need to make evidence-based programmatic decisions as opposed to anecdotal evidence or complaints. This is where program evaluation becomes important.

Program Evaluation in the University Context

Program evaluations assess the effectiveness of social programs through systematic research methods. Universities utilize program evaluations to determine: whether there is a need for new or existing programs (needs assessments), whether current programs have been implemented as intended (process evaluations) or whether the program is producing the desired effects (outcome evaluations) (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Needs assessments may identify a problem to be addressed, the people who would benefit, and the type of program required to address the problem. Alternately, needs assessments may determine whether a previous issue still exists and whether an existing program is still required. For example, universities may conduct a needs assessment to determine whether there is a need to increase student academic attainment, which students are most in need, and what program may service the students. Based on the findings and recommendations of the needs assessment, a new tutoring program may be introduced for first-year students. Process evaluations are used to determine whether the target population is accessing the program and whether the program has been

implemented successfully. Using the same example, a process evaluation may be conducted to ensure that: first-year students are aware of the program, accessing the tutoring services, and there are enough tutors to service the clientele. Based on the results of the evaluation, additional advertising techniques may be implemented or more tutors hired. Outcome evaluations determine whether the program is achieving objectives and producing the desired change. An outcome evaluation may be conducted to ensure that students accessing one-on-one tutoring have an increase in academic attainment as a result of the service. The above illustrates the ways in which program evaluations can aid universities in making sound programmatic decisions. It can be a powerful tool to ensure that the needs of students are being addressed. Now to discuss the current concern that is the focus of this thesis.

Inadequate Writing Skills a Cause of Student Attrition

In 2013/2014, over 45,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in Manitoba universities (Statistics Canada, 2015). Unfortunately, approximately 25% of Manitoba undergraduate students will not complete their program of study (Council on Post-secondary Education in Manitoba, 2012). Students withdraw from university for a variety of reasons: academic difficulty (Bettinger & Long, 2009), change in academic program interests (Kirby & Sharp, 2001), family (Roberts, 2011), social isolation (Brady & Allingham, 2007), employment (Roberts, 2011), health (Chow, 2010; Finnie, Childs, & Qiu, 2012), and finances (Wintre, Bowers, Gordner, & Lange, 2006). Universities can address at least one cause of attrition: academic difficulty, by understanding and addressing some of the causes of poor academic performance.

Many university classes have a large written component built into the curriculum. One reason for academic difficulty is that incoming students are often not sufficiently prepared to write at the university level (Boylan, Bonham, & White, 1999). Furthermore, many students do not feel high school has equipped them with the necessary writing skills needed for university education (Balduf, 2009;

Soiferman, 2012) and even students with high incoming grade point averages have reported struggling with writing assignments (Carroll, 2002).

In general, students are not prepared to write at the university level because the writing requirements in high school are quite different compared to the requirements at university. High school writing assignments are shorter in length, have little or no research component, and do not require complex analysis (Carroll, 2002; Soiferman, 2012). The difference in writing expectations between high school and university can lead to academic difficulty.

Evaluation of University Writing Programs

To address attrition caused by academic difficulty, universities offer writing programs to improve writing skills of incoming students. Program offerings typically include remedial English writing courses (Callahan & Chumney, 2009), discipline-specific academic courses (Fallahi, Austad, Fallahi, & Wood, 2006), and writing workshops (Norton & Crowley, 1995). The goal of each writing program is to equip students to write at the university level and outcome evaluations allow universities to measure the effectiveness of writing programs. Each type of writing program will be reviewed below.

Remedial writing courses are targeted to under-prepared high school students entering university (Boylan et al., 1999) and focus on grammar, essay mechanics and essay structure. Evaluations have yielded mixed results as to the effectiveness of remedial programs. Some studies found that students who completed remedial programs had higher grade point averages (Leake & Lesik, 2007) and were more likely to persist to graduation (Bettinger & Long, 2009). However, other results indicate that students who completed remedial English programs were no more likely to graduate than similar students who did not complete the program (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; Bettinger & Long, 2005). Boatman and Long (2010) found that remedial writing courses were most effective for students with lower levels of writing skills and less effective for higher-ability students on the cusp of needing remedial help. This may help to explain the mixed results as to the effectiveness of remedial programs.

Discipline-specific writing courses are intended to improve the writing of university students in a particular field of study. The focus is on essay structure, academic writing and research. Goddard (2003) conducted an outcome evaluation of a semester long course focused on academic writing in the field of psychology. Significant improvements in the areas of skill development (grammar, APA style) and attitude changes (more positive attitudes toward writing) as a result of the course occurred. Johnson, Tuskenis, Howell, and Jaroszewski (2011) found that students who completed the course *Thinking and Writing in Psychology* significantly improved their writing skills (skill development) and had higher GPAs in a subsequent research methods course (academic attainment).

Workshops/labs/seminars are another means to provide writing skill development. These types of programs are shorter in length and may focus on one specific skill such as essay structure, academic writing, research, or documentation skills; or on a combination of skills. Norton and Crowley (1995) evaluated an 8-session academic skills workshop that was part of a first-year psychology course curriculum. Students who attended all workshop sessions obtained higher grades in the first-year psychology course essay, examinations and final grade. Brock University (2011) conducted an outcome evaluation of small group learning skills workshops and one-on-one personalized instruction and found that students in the program had a smaller decline rate in grades when transitioning from high school to university, higher grades in university, and higher retention rates compared to students not in the program.

The above literature reviewed different writing programs that post-secondary institutions utilize to increase student writing ability, support students academically, and to reduce attrition. Program evaluation of writing courses is vital to ensure that students are receiving helpful instruction. Strong academic writing programs in university will help to reduce attrition due to academic difficulty. The following is an evaluation of the academic writing program at Canadian Mennonite University.

Academic Writing Lab Program Evaluation at Canadian Mennonite University

I have worked at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) for eight years in the Registrar's Office and my current role is Assistant Registrar. A mandatory requirement for first-year students is to satisfy an academic writing requirement. The requirement is in place to aid students in developing writing and research skills required at university. The majority of students complete the requirement by enrolling in the Academic Writing lab (AWL). The AWL is an 8-week long, not-for-credit workshop designed to improve the academic writing and research skills of first-year students. The lab sessions focus on writing skills (grammar, essay construction) and research skills.

Throughout my eight years of work, I have heard students complain about having to take the AWL. Common complaints I heard were: "It [the AWL] is a waste of time", "I don't learn anything", and "I know this information already". Comments on course evaluations supported the anecdotal complaints. At the same time, I listened to various faculty instructors question the usefulness of the academic writing lab. Some faculty members were frustrated because they perceived first year university students' writing abilities to be substandard and did not feel confident that the academic writing lab was addressing the problems. I was not the only one hearing concerns. The Academic Office at CMU decided to conduct an outcome evaluation to determine the helpfulness of the academic writing lab.

During the 2012-13 academic year, I conducted an outcome evaluation of the Academic Writing Lab for Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). CMU was interested in program effectiveness (improvement in writing and research skills), student and instructor attitudes toward the AWL, the impact of exemption from AWL sessions, the objectives of the lab, and ways to improve the program. The original program evaluation included information on two types of outcomes: attitudes toward the AWL and skill development (writing improvement). This thesis will analyze results obtained from the outcome evaluation, particularly focusing on the relationships between affective outcomes (motivation,

self-regulation, perceived writing ability), writing ability, and cumulative grade point average. The original evaluation did not focus on relationships between affective outcomes, writing abilities, and overall academic abilities. The thesis, therefore, examines the data from a new angle. The following four questions were explored.

1. How much did the students' affective characteristics, consisting of motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability, improve after completing the AWL?
2. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability (grammar and clarity; organization and coherence; and structure) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA)?
3. What is the relationship between each affective outcome (motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA)?
4. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability and each affective outcome?

Significance of this Study

There are a number of reasons why this thesis is important. Firstly, it explores the role that academic writing programs have on increasing students' writing ability and, consequently, academic attainment. It shows the relationship between writing ability and grade attainment. For institutions that are seeking ways to increase academic attainment and thereby, reduce attrition, the academic writing lab offers a programmatic option.

Secondly, it provides an alternative model of an academic writing program that is shorter than a full course. This is advantageous for institutions that are small in size or might not have the resources to fund a larger program. Luttrell, Bufkin, Eastman, and Miller (2010) argue that a shortened writing program is a good alternative because it requires less time and financial resources. This is important for universities who are looking to offer programs with fewer costs. Within Manitoba, and across Canada, budget constraints are becoming more of a factor and programs that produce tangible results with fewer overhead costs will become appealing.

Many programs focus on writing skill development but this study also looks at student beliefs and attitudes regarding their own abilities. This thesis is important because it calls attention to the relationship between students' beliefs and academic outcomes. A student's level of motivation, self-regulatory ability, and self-efficacy beliefs about their own writing may influence whether a student will try something new. It is a factor in why some students push to succeed and why others quit. Canadian institutions need to be aware of these factors when designing programs that help students succeed. For institutions seeking to increase academic attainment, it is important to understand the role that self-efficacy beliefs have on writing ability and grade attainment.

Finally, the findings of this thesis highlight a disconnection between students' perceptions of their writing ability and actual writing ability. Students' writing skills may increase in a short amount of time, but beliefs about writing ability take longer to change. If this thesis had only collected data on either student perceptions or writing abilities, but not both, the conclusions about program effectiveness would have been different. When evaluating first-year university programs, it is important that data on both student perceptions and actual abilities are collected to ensure a more accurate overall picture of program effectiveness and student development.

The next chapter will address in more detail the causes of student attrition and, more specifically, a deficiency of writing abilities as a cause of student attrition. The discussion will then shift to the three types of program evaluations: needs assessment, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation; utilized by universities. Afterward, remedial courses, discipline-specific courses, and writing workshops will be explored. Finally, the chapter will end by discussing the academic writing lab program evaluation that is the topic of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student Withdrawal from University due to Academic Writing Deficiencies

Every year students graduate high school or leave the work force to enter university. Unfortunately, not all students persist to graduation. As mentioned in the introduction, The Council on Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba (COPSE) reported that in 2010 approximately 25% of university undergraduate students in Manitoba did not complete their program of study (COPSE, 2012). The factors that may lead a student to withdraw from university include: academic difficulty (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Conway, 2001; Finnie et. al., 2012; Kirby & Sharpe, 2001; Wintre et al., 2006), family obligations (Roberts, 2011; Smith, 2007; Wintre et al., 2006), social isolation (Brady & Allingham, 2007), employment (Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2012; Finnie et al., 2012; Roberts, 2011; Wintre, et al., 2006), change in academic program interests (Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2012; Finnie et al., 2012; Kirby & Sharp, 2001), physical and mental health (Chow, 2010; Finnie et al., 2012), and insufficient finances (Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2012; Wintre et al., 2006). More than one reason is often given for student withdrawal from university. Tinto (1982) writes that “not all those who enter are equally equipped either in skills (academic, social or otherwise) and/or motivated to finish a course of study once begun” (p. 696). Of particular concern for institutions are students who cite academic difficulties as a reason for withdrawing from university (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Conway, 2001; Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2012; Finnie et al., 2012; Kirby & Sharpe, 2001; Wintre et al., 2006). Academic difficulties of students, due to inadequate writing skills, will be the focus of this thesis. Unlike many of the personal factors listed above, universities can reduce attrition caused by academic difficulty through targeted programming. This thesis aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical knowledge of how best to support students’ academic writing skills.

One reason for academic difficulty is a lack of writing preparedness upon entering university (Boylan et al., 1999). Throughout the years post-secondary students have reported that high school has not adequately prepared them for university studies (Balduf, 2009; Brady & Allingham, 2007; Learning Skills Services at Brock University, 2011; Soiferman, 2012). Brady and Allingham (2007) surveyed second year university students in Canada and found that 25% did not feel the content learned in high school prepared them for university-level course material and 28% found the transition from high school to university stressful. Students cited lack of writing skills as one reason for the stressful transition. One limitation of the study is the fact that it surveyed only second year students; those students who did not return for a second year were not captured. As a result, there may be a higher percentage of first year students who do not feel adequately prepared. In another study, undergraduate students reported that upon entering university they lacked essay writing skills (Balduf, 2009). Similarly, students in Manitoba noted that there was an "inadequate amount of writing required in high school" and expressed the concern that "they had not been properly prepared for the demands of university writing assignments" (Soiferman, 2012, p. 227).

There is much research to support the fact that students who succeed in high school are more likely to succeed in university and there is a correlation between high school grades and academic achievement (Adebayo, 2008; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002; Pascarelli &Terenzini, 2005; Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2008). For example, Kirby and Sharpe (2001) found that the students who persisted with academic studies had higher high school cumulative grade averages. However, a high incoming average does not mean new students are equipped to write at the post-secondary level. Carroll (2002) completed a longitudinal study that examined the writing styles of twenty undergraduate students in the United States over four years of their university studies. The students in the study had adequate high school GPAs and SAT scores but struggled with writing assignments in the first two years. Though students with high incoming GPAs are more likely to succeed at university, Carroll (2002)

reminds us that these students need to develop writing skills at university. Research has shown a correlation between writing ability and academic achievement (Johnson et al., 2011). This is unsurprising since there is a large writing component on many of the assignments students are required to complete at university. These studies support the idea that incoming students are not always equipped with the writing skills necessary to succeed at university.

One reason for the lack of preparedness upon entering university is the difference between the writing assignments required in high school and university. Soiferman (2012) surveyed and interviewed Manitoba high school students regarding their perceptions of high school writing. Follow-up interviews were completed with students in the first semester of university. Students believed that the length of assignments in high school was too short and not reflective of the length of essays required in university. Students at Brock University reported that there was a greater workload at university and larger essay writing assignments (Learning Skills Services at Brock University, 2011). Furthermore, skills required for completing writing assignments differed from high school to university. Students "felt inadequately prepared for conducting research, for analyzing the assignments, for drafting an outline, and for writing an academic essay" (Soiferman, 2012, p. 234). Carroll (2002) argues that writing assignments in university are literacy tasks that "require much more than the ability to construct correct sentences or compose neatly organized paragraphs with topic sentences" (p. 3). She claims that writing assignments at the post-secondary level are more complex than in high school. There is an apparent gap in the length and types of assignments required in high school and in university.

To summarize, one reason for students' withdrawal/attrition from university is experiencing academic difficulties. Ineffective writing skills are one factor contributing to academic difficulty and low university grades. Ineffective writing skills upon entering university are often caused by a lack of preparedness in high school and different writing expectations at university. Therefore, a way for institutions to address withdrawal is by offering programs to improve writing skills for incoming

students. Program offerings range from remedial English writing programs (Caldwell, DeRusha, Stanton-Hammond, Straight, & Sullivan, 2011; Callahan & Chumney, 2009) to discipline-specific academic courses (Fallahi et al., 2006; Goddard, 2003; Kokaliari, Brainerd, & Roy, 2012) to workshops/labs/seminars (Norton & Crowley, 1995; Saunders & Scialfa, 2003).

Offering programs to improve writing skills is one piece of the puzzle, but it cannot end there. It is vital to ensure that the programs provided are effective. Tinto (1982) argues that to reduce student withdrawal from post-secondary studies, institutions need to improve "the quality of our educational offerings" (p. 697). Program evaluation is one way for institutions to determine the effectiveness of existing programs and identify ways to improve such programs.

The focus of this thesis is a program evaluation of a university first-year academic writing program intended to improve student writing. Prior to discussing the specific academic writing lab program evaluation, it is important to understand of program evaluation process within the context of post-secondary institutions. Following the description of needs assessment, process evaluations, and outcome evaluations, a review of the evaluation of university level academic writing programs will be presented next.

Program Evaluations at Post-Secondary Institutions

Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) define program evaluation as "the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs in ways that are adapted to political and organizational environments and are designed to inform social action to improve social conditions" (p. 16). Program evaluation within the educational context is not a recent development. The systematic evaluation of education programs in North America first began in the early 1900s (Rossi et al., 2004). Institutions initiate program evaluations to assess outcomes of new or existing programs (Jung, Martin, Graden, & Awrey, 1994) for either internal purposes or at the request of external agencies, accreditation bodies or governments (Grimes 2011; Hubball, Britnell, Gold, & Mighty,

2007; Powell, 2013; Stivers & Phillips, 2009; Volkwein, 2010a; Volkwein, 2010b). As Yin and Volkwein (2010) state, “higher education institutions are now facing constant pressure for accountability on student outcomes from parents, trustees, and the government” (p. 80). Program evaluations are also used to ensure financial resources are allocated to programs that are effectively meeting programmatic goals (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Mandel & Evans, 2003; Roueche & Roueche, 1998). More specifically, and relevant to this thesis, Trosset and Weisler (2010) argue that program evaluations are one way to identify the causes of attrition and to improve student retention.

Program evaluations are conducted at various levels within the institution, ranging from those that focus on a specific functions, to programs and academic departments, and most broadly, institution-wide initiatives. Program evaluation is conducted in real world settings addressing program gaps or analyzing existing programs. The types of programs evaluated vary greatly, but each uses methodical procedures. Program evaluations use systematic research methods to collect, analyze and interpret data as well as to provide information on program effectiveness (Rossi et al., 2004).

Each program, and therefore program evaluation, is unique but there is overlap in the types of information studied and the methods used. The program evaluation presented in this thesis is also unique but the methods employed are drawn from existing program evaluation literature and contributes to the growing body of research. Three common types of evaluations conducted in post-secondary settings are needs assessments, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation (see Table 1 for a summary of each program). Each type of program evaluation will be discussed and examples given. Similarities between each program evaluation and the program evaluated in this thesis will be highlighted. In each of these programs there is an emphasis on academic success or retention and attrition.

Needs Assessments. Needs assessments are used to identify problems that need to be addressed, the target audience who may benefit, and the type of services required to address the identified problems. As a consequence, needs assessments may determine the need for a new program or judge whether an ongoing program should continue or be changed (Rossi et al., 2004). Researchers use surveys, focus groups, censuses, and university records to gather information (Rossi et al., 2004). Blaich and Wise (2010) conducted a needs assessment of first-year post-secondary student needs based upon a student experience survey, student focus group data, and faculty focus group data. The survey data and focus group data identified a theme of low academic rigour in first-year courses: students reported spending relatively little time preparing for classes and assignments. To address the issue of low academic rigour, the institution increased the assignment load for first-year courses. Subsequent evaluations found that the revised student academic workload and academic rigour corresponded to an improvement in retention rates.

Volkwein (2010a) analyzed student satisfaction surveys, admissions data, course enrolments, student academic performance, and retention data to help identify what was needed to improve retention of first year students at university. Based on the needs assessment, the institution added an academic component to all first-year student orientations. In addition, a number of initiatives were introduced: a peer mentoring program, study skills workshops, living-learning communities, and an instructional development center for faculty development of teaching skills.

These two examples highlight the ways in which a needs assessment can drive the development of programs for incoming students. Furthermore, both evaluations focus on the retention and success of students. Similarities between these two program evaluations and the one to be presented in this thesis are the focus on first-year students and the use of surveys to collect information from students. The use of academic performance data in the evaluation is common in both the Volkwein (2010a) evaluation and the evaluation to be described in this thesis.

Process Evaluation. Process evaluations are conducted to determine whether the program has been implemented effectively, the extent to which a program reaches the desired audience and how the required services are being delivered (Rossi et al., 2004). Process evaluations are often required by accrediting bodies or funding agencies (Hubball et al., 2007) and may be conducted by internal or external evaluators. Snart and MacKay (2001) conducted a process evaluation to determine whether a revised Bachelor of Education program at University of Alberta was adequately serving students. The evaluation elicited both qualitative and quantitative data from students and instructors that focused on student perceptions of various components of the program, strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions. While the students indicated satisfaction with the content learned in the program and the assessment methods, there was concern with the program scheduling (classroom and placement times), duplication of content delivery, and lack of support from program facilitators. Based on the process evaluation assessment, a number of changes were implemented to the program to ensure that program goals were met. For instance, course content and assignments were reviewed to ensure that the program covered the intended material with minimal overlap. Furthermore, program facilitators received additional training to ensure that the program was administered effectively.

A process evaluation may be conducted on its own or in conjunction with an outcome evaluation. Gerretson and Golson (2005) conducted an evaluation of a university general education program. The evaluators first collaborated with administrators to redefine student learning outcomes to allow for clearer evaluation and to incorporate the student learning outcomes within the general education curriculum. Course-specific rubrics were developed to assess whether program goals and student learning outcomes had been implemented in course syllabi, tests, and assignments. Student outcome data were course specific: composition courses evaluated writing outcomes on assignments while mathematics courses evaluated test scores. The evaluation identified that success in introductory courses does not guarantee increased improvement throughout upper-level courses. It was found that

composition skills needed for academic success could not be mastered in one introductory course but needed to be honed throughout the education program. As a result, upper-level composition courses went through a similar evaluation process to align learning objectives and assignments in order to encourage composition improvements. Mastery of composition skills could then be tracked throughout a student's education. The evaluation format allowed the programs to consistently track change, to plan, and to assess learning outcomes on an ongoing basis. There are many similarities between the evaluation conducted by Gerretson and Golson (2005) and the one that will be presented in the thesis. Firstly, both evaluations was spearheaded by administration, but there was collaboration between administration and teachers. Furthermore, the learning outcomes were redefined in order to be evaluated, and course-specific rubrics were used for assessment. Lastly, both programs focused on improving the writing of first-year students. Stivers and Phillips (2009) assessed student learning at a university business school based on a process and outcome evaluation. For the process evaluation, they identified program learning goals, intended learning outcomes, and criteria to assess the degree to which learning goals and outcomes were met. The new learning goals and objectives were incorporated into the program resulting in increased cohesion of program goals throughout the curriculum and greater buy-in from faculty. The outcome evaluation assessed student learning using professional licensing exams, standardized tests, common exams for courses and capstone projects. The result of the outcome evaluation was reaccreditation of the business program. This example highlights how process evaluations may be conducted independently or in conjunction with outcome evaluations within the post-secondary setting.

The program evaluation presented in this thesis incorporated aspects of both process evaluations and outcome evaluations by redefining learning outcomes and goals and by using student assignments and tests to assess student learning.

Outcome Evaluation. To ensure that academic support programs are benefitting students and achieving objectives, regular and systematic outcome evaluation is needed (Boylan et al., 1999). Outcome evaluations are program evaluations that determine the extent to which a program is producing desired outcomes, meeting objectives, or leading to unintended outcomes. Outcome evaluations, also called impact assessments, establish whether the identified outcomes are the result of the program (Rossi et al., 2004). This is done by comparing the outcomes indicators of program participants (e.g., Student GPA) with the projected outcomes had the participants not taken part in the program. Within post-secondary institutions, outcome evaluations are conducted to determine the effectiveness of new programs, pilot programs, and ongoing or established programs.

Given that the focus of the proposed study is an outcome evaluation, the majority of studies examined in this literature review fall into this category. Using categories identified by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), the following section will look at evaluations of post-secondary programs designed to affect students in the following ways: attitude and belief changes (Royal & Tabor, 2008), skills development (Carstens & Bernstein Howell, 2012; Jung et al., 1994), and educational attainment/persistence/retention (Goff, 2011; McGrath & Burd, 2012). These studies reflect a range of outcome evaluations at the post-secondary level. This thesis explores student development in all three areas: attitude and belief changes, skills development, and educational attainment.

Students' Attitude and Belief Changes. Post-secondary institutions play a role in influencing students' attitudes and beliefs about their personal and academic abilities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Royal and Tabor (2008) conducted an outcomes assessment on a course designed to promote success of probationary students by improving student attitudes of academic success and self-efficacy beliefs. The course focused on styles of learning, academic success strategies, professor expectations, and issues facing post-secondary students. Students were randomly assigned to either the course or a control group and completed Likert-style first-year experience questionnaires that focused on student

attitudes toward academic success and self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own behavioural, cognitive, or physical abilities to accomplish a task or produce an outcome and is not a measure of one's actual ability (Bandura, 1986). Compared to students who were not enrolled in the course, students who completed the course reported higher ratings on the following self-efficacy beliefs: personal achievement capability, behavioural responsibility, decision making capacity, a sense of discipline (self-regulation), motivation to succeed academically, and improved academic achievement. The evaluation to be described in this thesis will also explore whether self-regulation, motivation, and writing ability self-efficacy beliefs are altered following program participation.

Skills Development. A necessary goal in post-secondary study is the development and attainment of skills by students in the areas of subject matter and cognitive competence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Two evaluations, one assessing subject matter competence and one assessing cognitive competence, will be examined.

Subject matter competence refers to the attainment of specific academic skills such as, but not limited to, verbal, written, and mathematic skills. Jung, Martin, Graden, and Awrey (1994) evaluated whether an experimental shared-supervision clinical placement program maintained the quality of student skill development found in the traditional program. The evaluation used a variety of measures, namely student learning contracts, student performance feedback sheets, questionnaires from students, clinical preceptors, and group supervisors' evaluations, to evaluate whether students learned the necessary skills. Jung and colleagues (1994) found that students learned the necessary skills in the experimental clinical placement program. This evaluation by Jung and colleagues (1994) and the evaluation that is described in this thesis evaluate skill development and elicit information from students.

Cognitive competence refers to the intellectual growth of students as a result of academic study in areas such as critical thinking and reflective judgment. Carstens and Bernstein Howell (2012) conducted an outcome evaluation of a first-year student seminar that sought to improve writing through development of inquiry-guided learning skills. Inquiry-guided learning, also called problem-based learning, teaches students to approach a problem by asking questions. The seminar taught students to critically analyze complex issues and identify constructive questions, to identify the different disciplines' approaches to question construction, and to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The effectiveness of the seminar was measured by examining the use of inquiry-guided learning skills in student essays and student perceptions of their own inquiry-guided learning skills. While survey results indicated that students felt the course helped to develop critical inquiry skills, final essay examinations yielded mixed results as to the effectiveness of the seminar. The above program evaluation highlighted the complex critical thinking skills necessary to write papers in university and identified the need to equip first-year students with these skills. Furthermore, by gathering data on both student perceptions and student essay results, Carstens and Bernstein Howell (2012) highlighted discrepancies between perceptions and performance.

Educational Attainment/Persistence/Retention. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) identify educational attainment as the number of years of completed study or degrees obtained and identify persistence as reenrollment in school. Academic success of students, typically represented by grade point average, is vital to ensure student persistence/retention, and academic attainment. Post-secondary institutions conduct outcome evaluations to determine whether specific programs increase academic success and student retention. Programs may be geared toward first-year students (Goff, 2011) and probationary students (McGrath & Burd, 2012). In each of these three studies, participation in the program increased grades or retention.

Goff (2011) conducted an outcome evaluation of a student service peer-mentoring program designed to ensure first-year student academic success. Upper-level students designed and led peer-mentoring sessions for first-year students that focused on study strategies and transitioning to university. Data were obtained from three sources: student surveys, participation records, and grades in a first-year biology course. A significant relationship was found between attendance in the peer mentoring program and final grade in the biology course. More specifically, students who attended at least four peer-mentoring sessions had higher grades in the course than students who attended fewer than four sessions. The peer-mentoring program had a direct effect on student grade attainment. This thesis will examine the relationship of the CMU academic writing program on grade attainment.

McGrath and Burd (2012) evaluated whether a success course designed for probationary students increased student academic success and retention. The course educated students on academic policies and procedures, taught strategies for success (note-taking and test-taking), explored different academic majors, promoted individual student development and engagement on campus (met with instructors, advisors, and student services). Compared to similar students who did not enroll in the success course, students who completed the course were more likely to be off probation by the end of the year, more likely to persist into their next year of studies, and more likely to graduate within four to five years. The probationary student success program taught skill development with the goal of increasing academic success. The program described in this thesis focused on writing skill development with the goal of increasing academic success.

These studies illustrate the many ways institutions utilize program evaluations. The overview of program evaluations within the university context positions the evaluation conducted for this thesis within the larger body of literature. The underlying goal of each program is to promote academic success or retention of students. There is overlap of the types of data collected and the method used in the evaluations. Earlier this paper identified academic difficulty as one cause for attrition. Academic

difficulty may be attributed to a lack of writing skills of incoming students. Program evaluations focused on evaluating writing programs will now be reviewed.

Types and Effectiveness of Academic Writing Programs at Universities

Effective writing skills are important for academic success but not all students enter university with these skills (Carroll, 2002; Soiferman, 2012). Institutions address attrition due to academic difficulties by offering a range various programs to improve academic writing skills. Some programs target students with poor academic writing skills while other programs are available to students with varying levels of academic writing skills. Programs to improve academic writing skills can be grouped into three categories: remedial writing courses, discipline-specific academic courses, and workshops/labs/seminars (See Table 2 for a summary of writing programs). The academic writing lab that is the focus of this thesis needs to be examined within the context of these three categories. The following section will define each program type, provide examples of evaluations and discuss findings.

Remedial Courses. Remedial courses in post-secondary education provide a pathway for under-prepared high school students to succeed at university (Boylan et al., 1999) by teaching mechanics such as grammar as well as sentence, paragraph and essay structure (Leake & Lesik, 2007). Remedial programs are only available to students with low levels of academic writing ability whereas other academic writing programs discussed later are available to students of varying ability levels. Both remedial courses and the academic writing lab evaluated in this thesis focus on grammar and essay structure. Many universities and colleges offer remedial courses in English/academic writing to students with low academic ability, but the effectiveness of these remedial courses is mixed. Leake and Lesik (2007) found that students in an academic writing remedial program had higher GPAs after program completion than similar students who did not participate in the program. Bettinger and Long (2009) tracked students with similar college entrance scores over six years and found that students who completed remedial courses focused on academic writing were 12% less likely to drop out of school and

11% more likely to graduate within six years. In contrast, other studies found either mixed results or no significant effect of remedial programs (Attewell et al., 2006; Bettinger & Long, 2005).

From a larger sample that included students from both two and four-year colleges, Attewell, Lavin, Domina, and Levey (2006) compared students with similar characteristics (high school GPA, class rank, demographic variables) who did or did not take remedial writing courses. In two-year colleges, students enrolled in remedial writing courses were more likely to graduate compared to similar students who did not enroll in remedial writing courses. However, for students attending four-year colleges, taking remedial courses in writing had no significant effect on graduation. Attewell and colleagues (2006) hypothesize the differences stem from students' pre-existing skill set brought from high school. Similarly, in an earlier study, Bettinger and Long (2005) found that completion of an English remediation course had little effect on credit hour completion, likelihood of continuance, or likelihood of degree completion. The above program evaluation findings differ as to the effectiveness of remedial programs. The mixed findings are consistent with Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) review of remedial program studies found some evidence of remedial programs effectiveness and impact on degree persistence.

Two reasons that may account for variation in effectiveness of remedial writing programs are program resources and students' writing ability upon entering post-secondary institutions. Callahan and Chumney (2009) compared the effectiveness of remedial writing programs at a four-year university and a two-year community college. Students at both the college and university had similar socio-economic backgrounds, high school characteristics, and had scored similarly on the mandatory placement tests administered by their institutions. A combination of ethnographic data, interviews with instructors and students, course documents, student writing samples and academic outcome data, showed that students in the remedial writing course at the university were more likely to pass than their counterparts in a writing course at the community college. Callahan and Chumney (2009) point out that this difference may be due to the greater resources within the university program. In particular, they

found that the university provided more financial resources to enhance the program in three key areas: curriculum development, access to tutors, and instructor training. A second reason for the difference in results is that effectiveness of remediation programs may vary depending on level of student academic preparedness. Boatman and Long (2010) found that for students with a higher incoming writing ability, on the cusp of needing remediation, completion of remedial courses had no effect on degree completion. For students with low writing ability, placement in remedial education significantly increased the likelihood of degree completion. Incoming writing ability was assessed by university placement exams. This suggests that remedial writing courses were most effective for students with lower levels of academic preparedness and less effective for higher-ability students on the cusp of needing remedial help. This study is important because it illustrates that writing programs may affect groups of students to varying extents. The academic writing program that is the focus of the thesis is geared toward students with varying levels of academic preparedness and may affect students differently.

The above stated studies focused only on retention and completion rates. Caldwell, DeRusha, Stanton-Hammond, Straight, and Sullivan (2011) completed an outcomes evaluation of a remedial English course to determine the effect on writing ability as measured by students' understanding of essay structure. Essays were scored using a rubric designed to assess introduction, topic sentences, and conclusion. While students in the course knew how to structure an essay, they lacked two writing skills expected at the college level: depth of thought and engagement with the topic. Based on the findings, 13 recommendations were made to address the types of assignments in the course (focus on depth and breadth), the types of readings assigned to students (varied, mix of complex and fun readings, challenge students to think deeper), levels of support and expectations of instructors, and emphasis on varied essay structures. A limitation of this evaluation is that it only had post-treatment measures. It did not

assess the change in student writing ability from beginning to the end of the program. The program evaluation presented in this thesis obtained writing samples at the beginning and end of the program.

Discipline Specific Post-Secondary Courses. Many post-secondary institutions use discipline-specific writing programs to support students academically. These can be either discipline specific academic research writing courses (Goddard, 2003; Johnson, Tuskenis, Howell, & Jaroszewski, 2011; Julien, Lexis, Schuijers, Samiric, & McDonald, 2012) or writing components built into the existing course curriculum (Fallahi et al., 2006; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Pain & Mowl, 1996; Reiff, 1980). As will be shown, these programs are not intended as remedial courses but serve to enhance discipline-specific writing or research skills of all students. The program evaluation presented in this thesis also focuses on discipline specific writing and research skill development.

Goddard (2003) conducted an outcome evaluation of a semester long course focused on academic writing in the field of psychology. The course taught academic writing in psychology and APA writing style. Evaluation methods included a pre- and post-course test focused on grammar and APA style as well as a pre- and post-course Likert-style inventory assessing attitudes toward writing. Students who completed the program had significant improvements in all three outcomes: more positive attitudes toward writing (attitude change), grammar scores (skill development), and APA style test scores (skill development). The author suggests that the teaching of APA writing style and academic writing within the field of psychology led to the improvement. The evaluation methods were test based and not essay based. I would argue that it is difficult to establish improvement in actual writing ability without evaluating writing samples from students. The study in this thesis reviewed argumentative essay writing samples from students in the academic writing program.

Comparable results were found by Johnson et al. (2011). Students who completed the course *Thinking and Writing in Psychology* significantly improved their writing skills as measured by essay assignments. Furthermore, when all psychology students were rated by faculty members in four upper

level courses one year later, students who completed the thinking and writing course were rated higher in the area of writing compared to students who did not take the course, and had higher GPAs in a subsequent research methods course. This assessment found that participation in the writing course did improve writing ability and academic performance.

APA competence and writing ability was explored also by Luttrell, Bufkin, Eastman, and Miller (2010) in an evaluation of a scientific writing course required of behavioural science majors. They found students who completed a one-credit hour, semester long, scientific writing course showed greater gains in APA competence than students who did not complete the course. APA competence was measured using pre- and post- multiple-choice tests. Completion of the course did not significantly improve writing performance, as measured by a literature review assignment. While it appears that the program did see improvement in APA competence, it did not produce significant gains in the area of writing ability. Luttrell et al. (2010) suggested that there was a gain in writing ability but differences between the experimental and control groups masked any effects. The control group was on average older, made up of more advanced students, and had more experience writing scientific papers than the program group. The evaluators deemed the program a partial success. The academic writing program that is the focus of this thesis also tests for writing competence using multiple-choice tests and writing assignments. Furthermore, both programs emphasize research based writing in university and are shorter in length than an average writing course.

Fallahi, Austad, Fallahi, and Wood (2006) evaluated the effects of a writing component built into an introductory psychology course on students' writing skills. Similarly to the academic writing program to be evaluated in this thesis, this writing program focused on four writing skills: grammar, writing style, mechanics of writing, and referencing. A rubric was used to measure the writing skills components on five writing assignments throughout the semester. While there was a significant improvement in referencing skills early on in the program, improvements in mechanics, writing style, and grammar were

found toward the end of the program. One explanation of the early improvement in referencing skills is that compared to the other three skills, which typically require a longer period to develop, APA referencing could be considered a less challenging aspect of writing, and therefore, can be acquired in less time.

Similarly, findings by Kokaliari, Brainerd, and Roy (2012) support the idea that time is required to see improvement in writing skills. They evaluated a writing and research skill program that was focused on different aspects of writing and was integrated throughout all four years of the social work program. Students who completed the capstone course prior to the implementation of the program served as the writing and research skills control group. Capstone research papers written in the final year on the social work program were used to assess writing and research skills for students in the experimental program. Students who had been exposed to the writing program for less than three years had no significant differences in writing ability compared to the control group. Students who had been exposed to the writing program for three or more years had significantly better writing scores. This study suggests the need for prolonged and repeated exposure to writing instruction over the course of a student's academic career. Unlike many writing programs, including the one evaluated in this thesis, the program reported upon by Kokaliari and colleagues takes a longitudinal approach to writing development and found success in the long-term approach to writing development.

Writing Programs designed as Workshops, Labs, and Seminars. A third way institutions provide support for academic skill development is through programs that are shorter than full-semester courses. These shorter programs may be referred to as workshops, labs or seminars, but have similar characteristics. These programs differ from remedial and discipline specific courses in the following ways: usually not for academic credit, are optional, and may or may not be available to all students. Students choose to attend writing skills workshops to improve grades, improve writing skills, or for help with particular assignments (Learning Skills Services at Brock University, 2011). Some of the more

common workshop/lab programs that have been studied include topics such as writing skills (Norton & Crowley, 1995; Saunders & Scialfa, 2003) and study skills (Malett, Kirschenbaum, & Humphrey, 1983). The academic writing lab evaluated in this thesis is considered a workshop because it is not for credit. However, unlike the workshops discussed below, the academic writing lab program is mandatory.

Norton and Crowley (1995) evaluated an 8-session academic skills workshop that was part of a first-year psychology course curriculum. This workshop was optional and not for course credit. Essay construction skills and exam-writing skills were two of the topics of the workshops. Student academic performance was measured in the following ways: introductory psychology course work, examination score, and overall grade for the psychology course. Students who attended all workshop sessions did significantly better on essays and examinations, and obtained higher final grades in the psychology course than students who attended none of the workshops. This finding supports the academic benefit of workshops for students.

The Learning Skills Services department [LSS] at Brock University (2011) completed a program evaluation of small group learning skills workshops and one-on-one personalized instruction. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated using online surveys, focus groups, academic outcome and retention data. The writing skills workshop was the best attended workshop (39% of survey respondents) followed by the study skills workshop (37% of survey respondents). Overall, users of the LSS felt satisfied with the quality of instruction received. Students in the LSS program had a smaller decline in grades when transitioning from high school to university, higher grades in university, and higher retention rates compared to students who did not use the learning skills services. The program showed success for students entering university. Based on the results, the evaluators made the following recommendations: the addition of discipline specific learning skills workshops geared toward upper level university students, more promotion of the workshops through various social media outlets, and the development of more online learning skills workshops. This evaluation to determine the success

of the Brock University program is important because it evaluated both academic performance and student satisfaction. The findings of the evaluation support the benefit of writing skills workshops.

The overview of the literature presented above reviewed different approaches that post-secondary institutions utilize to support students' academic success. Remedial programs focus on students with low writing ability. With the exception of Caldwell et al. (2011), remedial program outcomes focus on GPA, credit hours earned, and degree completion, but do not assess individual students' writing. Discipline-specific writing courses and academic workshops were geared toward all students regardless of writing ability. These outcome evaluations examine writing assignments, research assignments and GPA to gauge program effectiveness. These programs are limited to students in specific disciplines. Workshops are targeted to a wider body of students but often focus on pre- and post-test scores and do not assess student writing.

The Academic Writing Lab program, the focus of this study, is geared toward improving writing skills of students. This program is unique because, unlike remedial programs, it is geared toward students with moderate incoming writing ability. It covers some of the same topics as remedial programs (grammar and essay structure) and discipline-specific writing programs (research essays, documentation) but does not go into as much depth on such topics (See Table 2 for a summary). Unlike discipline-specific programs, the Academic Writing lab is designed for students from a variety of disciplines and is implemented institution-wide. There are many similarities between the Academic Writing Lab program and writing skills workshops: content coverage, program length and not-for-credit status, but it differs because it is mandatory for students. This program may be an effective alternative for institutions seeking to increase the writing ability, and subsequently, academic success of incoming students. The following section will discuss the academic writing program that is the focus of this program evaluation.

The Case: Canadian Mennonite University's Academic Writing Program

All undergraduate students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) are required to satisfy an academic writing requirement prior to graduation. This can be met in one of three ways: exemption, completion of an academic writing course or completion of an academic writing lab. Incoming students judged to have a high level of writing skills are not required to complete the academic writing requirement. A student is deemed to have a high level of writing skill if a student has completed a university degree program or if a student has a high entrance score (90% in Grade 12 English and 90% entrance average). Incoming students who are considered to have low levels of writing skills are required to complete a three-credit hour course ACWR-1010 *Writing for Academic Purposes*. A student is judged to have a low level of writing skills if the student is admitted on a conditional admittance status (entrance average below 65%) or has a low high school English grade (<70% in Grade 12 English). The majority of incoming students, deemed to have a moderate level of writing skills, are required to complete the ACWR-0900 *Academic Writing Lab,* a not-for-credit workshop.

The Academic Writing Lab (AWL) at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is an 8-week workshop designed to improve the academic writing and research skills of first-year students with moderate writing abilities. The academic writing lab will be the focus of this thesis because the program's goal is on improving academic writing for incoming university students. Furthermore, the program has been in operation in a variety of forms since 2000 but has never been assessed. The three objectives listed in the syllabus are: "to achieve a sufficient understanding of the processes and components of effective academic writing, to gain an understanding of and appreciation for effective research, and to develop an excellent level of research and writing skills" (see Appendix A). The lab sessions focus on types of writing assignments, researching sources, documenting sources, essay structure (thesis, introduction, body, and conclusion), grammar and sentence structure, peer- and self-editing. The topics covered in the academic writing lab can be found in the full-semester writing courses

discussed above. In the academic writing lab, however, the amount of time spent on each topic is condensed. Each of the eight lab sessions is 75 minutes in length. The first and the last session focus mostly on skills testing and student surveys and six of the sessions focus on skill development. The academic writing lab is meant to serve as a review or general overview instead of an in-depth study. The lab is taken alongside a "linked course": a mandatory introductory Biblical and Theological Studies course taught by tenured faculty members. The introductory Biblical and Theological Studies course is required of all students, regardless of a students' program of study. The AWL topics are designed to teach the writing and research skills necessary to complete assignments in the "linked" course.

The academic requirements of the writing workshop are less rigorous than a typical full-semester academic writing course. Completion of the AWL is awarded on a pass/fail basis. Though no credits are awarded for the writing lab, the grade does appear on the transcript. Successful completion of the AWL is based on attendance and completion of a research essay for the linked first-year course. The AWL has more in common with academic skills workshops than with traditional remedial courses or discipline-specific writing courses. Both the AWL and academic skills workshops focus on topics such as plagiarism, writing skills, and research skills. Unlike most academic skills workshops, the AWL at CMU is mandatory.

Academic Writing Lab Program Evaluation. During the 2012-13 academic year, the Registrar's Office at Canadian Mennonite University conducted an outcome evaluation of the Academic Writing Lab. The evaluation was an initiative of the Assistant Vice President Academic and Registrar's offices at Canadian Mennonite University. The evaluation was conducted for two reasons. Firstly, the program had been in place for twelve years in various formats but had never been reviewed. Secondly, the university's academic program assembly was in discussion as to the best way(s) to resource students in the area of academic writing. I completed the program evaluation for the institution. The program was offered in six different time slots (sections) and one instructor taught all the sections. Each section was

composed of eight labs. Registrar's Office ensured that the instructor of the AWL was fully involved and supportive throughout the process. Student data collection occurred in all six sections of the AWL. Four of the sections took place in the fall semester (September to November) and two sections took place in the winter semester (January to March). Instructor Data Collection occurred in April of 2013. There were two parts to this evaluation. The first part consisted of the evaluation that was carried out for the interests of CMU. The second part, which focused on different outcomes and analyses, was carried out for this thesis. Each part is briefly described below.

The goal of CMU's program evaluation was to determine whether the program was effective (improvement in writing and research skills), whether to continue the program, and ways to improve the program. The program evaluation provided information on the following: (a) impact of the AWL on student writing ability, (b) appropriateness of the AWL student assignments, (c) student attitudes toward the AWL, (d) impact of exemption from AWL sessions, (d) clarification of the rationale and objectives of the lab, and (e) instructor attitudes toward the AWL. Furthermore, the evaluation made recommendations on ways to improve the program.

The evaluation for this thesis focused on additional aspects that were not included in the original CMU evaluation For example, student affective outcomes consisting of motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability were assessed both at the start and again near the end of the AWL. The AWL did not specifically address student self-efficacy beliefs regarding motivation, self-regulation, and writing ability, the researcher was interested as to whether the beliefs would change after gaining academic writing training. To explore the findings of the CMU evaluation further, cumulative grade point average (CGPA) for each student was compared with the various affective and cognitive (i.e., writing ability) outcomes. The purpose of examining these associations was to identify which of these immediate affective and cognitive outcomes might have the greatest impact on overall

academic achievement, as measured by CGPA. This thesis explored the following four research questions.

1. How much did the students' affective characteristics, consisting of motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability, improve after completing the AWL?
2. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability (grammar and clarity; organization and coherence; and structure) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA)?
3. What is the relationship between each affective outcome (motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability) and cumulative grade point average (CGPA)?
4. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability and each affective outcome?

As discussed above, program evaluation is a common method used in educational settings to assess the effectiveness of writing programs. This thesis will use the data obtained from the CMU program evaluation to answer four questions relating to student affective characteristics, writing ability, and grade attainment. The following chapters will detail the measures and methods used to obtain the data, the results obtained, and discuss the findings.

Chapter 3: Method

Participants

The program evaluation was conducted at Canadian Mennonite University with an undergraduate student population of approximately 500 students. One hundred twenty two (122) students were enrolled in one of six sections of the AWL and 111 students completed the evaluation process. Of the 11 students who did not complete the study, 3 were later exempted from the writing lab, 2 withdrew from the lab, 5 withdrew from the university, and 1 student did not complete the evaluation requirements. Of the 111 participants who completed the academic writing program evaluation, 41 were male, and 70 were female, 96 identified as first-year students, 7 as second-year

students, 6 as third-year students, 1 as a fourth-year student, and 1 in the fifth year. Almost all students (110) identified as full-time students (registered for three or more classes).

Full-time and contract faculty at CMU were invited to complete a survey to assess the knowledge of and perceptions of the academic writing lab. This was done to understand faculty members' perceptions of and knowledge of the academic writing lab. Of the 35 instructors contacted, 18 completed surveys. The amount of teaching experience varied with 9 faculty indicating they had 10 or more years of teaching experience. Only one instructor indicated this was his/her first year of teaching.

Data collection and completion of the internal program review was completed by the author for Canadian Mennonite University prior to the start of this thesis. CMU's Registrar granted permission for secondary use of this data for thesis purposes (see Appendix A). Therefore, given that the data was collected initially for internal program evaluation purposes and that it would be very difficult to reach the majority of the sample to obtain their consent, these two factors precluded application for ethical approval of the proposed study from the University of Manitoba's Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board.

Measures and Procedures

Data collection occurred over two semesters (September to November 2012, January to March 2013). For each section, data collection occurred two times: in the first lab session and in the final lab session. In the first lab, the AWL Instructor reviewed the syllabus with the students (see Appendix B). As evaluator, I explained the program review process, the rationale for the review, and the data that would be collected. I distributed a copy of the Academic Writing Lab Program Evaluation Information Sheet to each student (see Appendix C), and answered any questions. Students were given 10-15 minutes to complete the surveys and 30 minutes to complete the assessment essays.

The original program evaluation collected data using the following measures: student assessment essays, diagnostic test, student self-assessment surveys, student program evaluation survey, student research essay, instructor evaluation survey, and interview with the AWL instructor. Data from the assessment essays, research essay, and self-assessment surveys were used for this thesis. Each measure is described below in detail.

Essay Grading Rubric. The essay grading rubric (see appendix D), adapted by the researcher and the instructor from a prior rubric the instructor had used for many years, was the standard grading rubric used in the AWL. The rubric was used to grade the assessment essays and research essay (see below). The rubric was divided into four sub-sections: (a) Grammar and Clarity, (b) Organization and Coherence, (c) Structure (Thesis Statement, Introduction, and Conclusion) and (d) Documentation. Each sub-section had 6 items for a total of 24 items. Items were scored using a 4-point scale that ranged from 1 = Poor to 4 = Excellent. The researcher and AWL instructor compiled an Essay Rubric Checklist that detailed how each item would be scored and gave examples (see Appendix E). The total score obtained could range from 24 points to 96 points.

Assessment Essays. Two assessment essays were given to students enrolled in the academic writing lab, the first essay in the first lab, and the second essay during the final (eighth) academic writing lab (see Appendices F & G). The assessment essay questions were previous SAT College Admissions Exams essay questions. Previous SAT essay questions were chosen because the content is geared toward students in their late teens and the questions target general knowledge, requiring no prior university experience to complete. Studies have shown the SAT essays to be valid (Kubrin, Deng, & Shaw, 2011) and to correlate positively with first-year grade point average (Shaw, Mattern, & Patterson, 2011; Shaw & Kubrin, 2012). The use of student writing samples in this program assessment is consistent with several of the program evaluations reviewed above (Johnson et al., 2011; Luttrell et al., 2010; Fallahi et al., 2006).

The assessment essays were designed to assess student academic writing ability. Two different essay questions, each containing a prompt, a question, and instructions, were used in the assessment (see Appendices F & G). The prompt is a quote or an excerpt meant to introduce the question to be addressed in the essay. Half the academic writing lab students completed version A at the start of the program and half the students completed version B. Distribution of the essay versions were random. At the end of the program, students who had completed version A responded to version B and students who completed version B responded to version A. Students were informed that the assessment essays were not requirements of the course.

The researcher graded the student assessment essays. The assessment essays were graded using three of the four sub-sections of the Essay Grading Rubric: Grammar and Clarity, Organization and Coherence; and Structure (Thesis Statement, Introduction, and Conclusion). The fourth sub-section, documentation, was not used because the assessment essays were in class assignments and did not include a research component. For the purpose of clearly identifying ability levels, a sub-section score of less than 25 points reflected a poor level of writing ability, 25-48 points was moderate, and more than 48 points reflected a high level. The assessment essay total score could range between 18 to 72 points. For the purpose of clearly identifying ability levels, a score of less than 25 points reflected a poor level of writing ability, 25-48 points was moderate, and more than 48 points reflected a high level.

Research Essay. All students in the academic writing lab were required to submit a copy of a research paper written for the linked introductory Biblical and Theological Studies (BTS) course (see academic writing lab description above). The essay was not completed in class. The research essay assignment was designed to assess the writing and research skills taught in the lab. The essay was approximately 1500 words in length and involved a research component. One copy of the essay was submitted to the BTS course instructor and contributed to the overall grade in the course. A second copy of the essay was submitted to the academic writing lab instructor as a requirement of the academic

writing lab. The research essay was graded using the same Essay Grading Rubric (see Appendix D) used for the assessment essays. Academic writing ability was assessed on four sub-sections: Grammar and Clarity, Organization and Coherence; Structure (Thesis Statement, Introduction, and Conclusion); and Documentation. A sub-section score of less than 25 points reflected a poor level of writing ability, 25-48 points was moderate, and more than 48 points reflected a high level. The research essay total score could range between 24 to 96 points. For the purpose of clearly identifying ability levels, a score of less than 32 points reflected a poor level of writing ability, 33-64 points was moderate, and more than 65 points reflected a high level. The research essay was submitted after the lab sessions had concluded and was graded by the Academic Writing Instructor.

Self-Assessment Survey (SAS). The Writing Self-Regulatory Efficacy Scale, developed by Zimmerman and Bandura (1994), was administered to students. The researcher divided the items on the self-regulatory efficacy scale into three sub-sections: perceived motivation (items 8, 9, 16, 19, 20), perceived self-regulation (5,6,10,12,14,17,21,22,23,24), and perceived writing ability (1,2,3,4,7,11,13,15,18,25). The scale contained 25 Likert-style items and students rated their perceived efficacy for each item using a 7-point scale in which 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. No written values were given for the Likert-scale points 2 through 6. The overall score could range from 25 to 175 points. Two additional items, developed by the researcher, were added to the end of the survey (See Appendix H). The first item (5 point scale) assessed student writing self-efficacy in comparison to classmates. The second item (4 point scale) assessed student overall academic self-efficacy. The measure was administered to students in the academic writing lab during the first academic writing lab and in the final (eighth) academic writing lab.

Cumulative Grade Point Average. After the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year, the 2012-2013 cumulative grade point averages (CGPAs) were collected for each student who participated in the academic writing lab. Each course a student completes is assigned a letter grade. GPA is a point

scale in which each letter grade is assigned a numerical value ranging from 0 to 4.5. The points are assigned as follows: 0=letter grade of F, 1.0=letter grade of D, 2.0=letter grade of C, 2.5=letter grade of C+, 3.0=letter grade of B, 3.5=letter grade of B+, 4.0=letter grade of A, 4.5=letter grade of A+. The CGPA is calculated by adding the GPAs from each course and dividing by the number of courses. The cumulative GPA analysis was not part of the original program evaluation.

Chapter 4: Results

These results are presented in two main sections. The first section covers descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses to help assess validity evidence. The second section includes the results of applicable inferential analyses pertaining to each research question.

Descriptive and Preliminary Analyses

Assessment Essays. Table 3 shows the pre- and post-essay assignment means and standard deviations for the total scores and subscale scores of the 111 students enrolled in the academic writing lab. A pretest-posttest gain was found for each of the three subsections and the overall essay score, and all were significant except for the improvement of mean scores representing Structure. The mean score of Grammar and Clarity improved from (M = 21.0) to (M = 21.9), t (110) = 5.69, p < .001, d = -.54. Similarly, Organization and Coherence improved from (M = 13.7) to (M = 15.0), t (110) = 2.51, p = .013, d = -.24. Finally, the total essay scores increased from (M = 50.0) to (M = 53.0), t (110) = 3.35, p = .001, d = -.32. This suggests that students in the AWL had similar competencies in the area of grammar but varied greatly in ability to organize an essay. Visual inspection of the histograms representing the distribution of scores for each variable indicated that the distributions did not depart significantly from normality. Effect size, measured by Cohen's *d,* is an interpretation of the strength of relationship. The grammar and clarity subsection had a typical effect size while the organization and coherence subsection and total score had less than typical effect sizes. However, the importance of the finding is not determined by effect size alone and caution must be exercised when determining if the result is practically significant

(Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2008). Researchers argue that, within an educational context, even a small effect size may be significant for student achievement, especially if the effect is cumulative over time (Coes, 2002, Hedges & Hedberg, 2007).

For the pre-essay assignment, half of the students completed Version A and the other half completed version B. For the post-essay assignment, the students completed the other version of the assignment. The pre-assignment essay version was assigned randomly. To confirm that the difficulty level of each version was similar, the mean scores of the two versions were compared at the pretest and again at the posttest. The results of Levene's test indicated that the variances of each group on each occasion, did not differ significantly. Therefore, the mean scores were compared using an independent samples *t* tests. The *t* test scores are listed in Table 4. For each section, and the total essay score, there were no significant differences between the two versions. For example, the mean pretest scores for Grammar and Clarity were (*M* = 21.2) and (*M* = 20.9) for versions A and B respectively. Assuming that the participants in each split-half are similar in terms of the various characteristics that are relevant for this study (e.g., ability, motivation, supports), this indicates that the level of difficulty is similar between the two versions.

Student Research Essay. Table 5 shows the descriptives for the total score and four sub-section scores within the student research essay assignment. Recalling that each section is scored out of 24 points, similar to the pre- and post-essays, the Grammar and Clarity sub-section has the highest mean, 21.77 (*SD* = 2.06) and the Organization and Coherence sub-scale has the lowest mean score, 15.74 (*SD* = 5.70). The Documentation Sub-score, included only in the research essay assignment, a mean score of 19.58 (*SD* = 3.28). There is an increase in organization/coherence and structure scores from the assessment essays to research essay suggesting further improvement of these writing skills. There is virtually no change in the grammar and clarity scores from the post-assessment essay to the research

essay suggesting students have peaked in their ability. See Figure 1 for a graphical representation of the mean writing skills scores across all three essays.

Results for the Thesis Questions

Question 1. The first question that was addressed was: how much did the students' affective characteristics, consisting of motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability improve after completing the AWL? Descriptives for each of the three affective characteristics are listed in Table 6. Paired *t* tests showed that the students' levels of motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability did not change significantly from pretest to posttest. In addition, the effect sizes are less than typical and ranged from .03 (perceived writing ability) to .17 (motivation). These effect sizes reiterate, on a more practical level, that each of these affective characteristics changed minimally from the beginning to the end of the program.

Question 2. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability (grammar and clarity, organization and coherence, structure, and documentation) and CGPA? Mean pretest-posttest scores representing the first three were obtained from the each of the assessment essay and the research essay. The mean pretest-posttest representing documentation was scored from the research essay. Grade attainment was measured using cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Bivariate correlations between the three writing abilities of the assessment essay, the four writing abilities of the research essay, and CGPA are shown in Table 7. There was a significant relationship between CGPA and each of the assessment essay writing abilities: grammar and clarity, $r(109) = .22$, $p = .018$; organization and coherence, $r(109) = .25$, $p = .008$; and structure, $r(109) = .26$, $p = .005$. Compared to the assessment essay, the relationships between CGPA and each of the research essay writing abilities were slightly stronger: grammar and clarity, $r(99) = .36$, $p < .001$; organization and coherence, $r(99) = .36$, $p < .001$; structure, $(99) = .37$, $p < .001$; and documentation, $(99) = .52$, $p < .001$. All writing abilities were positively correlated with overall academic achievement, which indicates that students with stronger

writing abilities tend to obtain higher grades. In addition, as expected, these findings suggest that writing skills contribute a clear part toward overall academic achievement.

Among the writing abilities, all of the assessment essay scores were positively correlated. The strength of the correlations between grammar/clarity and organization/coherence, r (109) = .2, $p < .05$ and grammar/clarity and structure, r (109) = .24, $p < .05$, were similar but there was a very strong correlation between organization/coherence and structure, r (109) = .74, $p < .001$. Similar significant correlations were found among the research essay writing abilities: smaller correlations between grammar/clarity and other abilities, and stronger correlations between organization/coherence, structure, and Documentation. For example, the relationship between grammar/clarity and structure, r (99) = .25, $p < .05$, was smaller compared to the relationship between organization/coherence and structure, r (99) = .64, $p < .001$. Two research essay writing abilities: grammar/clarity and documentation, correlated with the assessment essay writing abilities. See Table 7 for complete correlations. These results suggest that students' grammatical ability is less an indicator of other essay writing abilities that require higher level thinking.

Question 3. What is the relationship between each affective outcome (motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability) and CGPA? Given that there was no significant change in affective scores between the beginning and end of the program, the scores representing the affective characteristics used in this analysis consisted of the posttest scores. Bivariate correlations between each of these variables are shown in Table 8. There was a significant relationship between CGPA and two of the affective outcomes: motivation, r(106) = .33, $p = .001$; and self-regulation, r(104) = .23, $p = .016$. A significant relationship was not found between CGPA and perceived writing ability, r(104) = .09, $p = .378$. This suggests that students' beliefs about their own writing ability is not correlated with their academic ability but other affective outcomes are related to academic ability. There were strong and significant relationships between each of the affective outcomes. Among the affective outcomes, the strongest

correlation occurred between perceived writing ability and self-regulation, r(100) = .70, *p*<.001, while the weakest correlation occurred between perceived writing ability and motivation, r(101) = .60, *p*<.001. This suggests that motivation, self-regulatory ability and perceived writing ability are all related.

Question 4. What is the relationship between each type of writing ability and each affective outcome? As in the previous correlational analysis involving the students' scores on the affective characteristics, only the post-test scores were used in this analysis. The scores representing the writing abilities: grammar and clarity, organization and coherence; and structure consisted of the mean pretest and posttest scores from each of the assessment and the research essays. A fourth writing ability, documentation, was scored from the research essay. Bivariate correlations between each pair of the 10 variables are shown in Table 9. Of the three affective characteristics, self-regulation was significantly correlated with the greatest number of the different writing abilities. While self-regulation was significantly correlated with only structure in the assessment essay, r(104) = .21, *p* = .031, it was significantly correlated with all four of the writing abilities in the research essay - grammar and clarity, r(94) = .23, *p* = .025; organization and coherence, r(94) = .31, *p* = .002; structure, r(94) = .22, *p* = .032; and documentation, r(94) = .26, *p* = .011. In comparison, there was little relation between each of the other two affective characteristics and writing ability. Motivation was significantly correlated with structure in the assessment essay, r(106) = .24, *p* = .014; and organization and coherence in the research essay, r(96) = .28, *p* = .005. The only writing skill that was correlated significantly with perceived writing ability was organization and coherence in the research essay, r(96) = .21, *p* = .038. One possible reason for the lack of correlation between affective outcomes and writing ability is the absence of feedback. This will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Canadian Mennonite University's original academic writing lab program evaluation looked at the effect of the AWL on student writing ability. The aim of this study is to expand the original work by looking at the effect of the AWL on affective outcomes as well as the connections between affective outcomes, writing abilities and overall academic achievement. To give context for the findings of this study, it is important to first discuss the preliminary findings from the original CMU evaluation. Afterward, each of the four research questions will be addressed, followed by the limitations of this study, and program implications.

Preliminary Analysis Findings

From beginning to the end of the program, there was a small improvement in students' grammar and clarity. This finding is consistent with previous research (Fallahi et. al., 2006; Goddard, 2003) that found increases in grammatical ability after completing an academic writing program. The AWL devotes an entire lab session to grammar so the increase in grammar scores is unsurprising. The grammar and clarity scores, with the pretest mean of about 21 out of 24 points, are much higher than the pretest means of the other writing abilities. The high grammar and clarity pretest mean scores reflect what could be considered as a 'ceiling effect' as that mean score was fairly close to the maximum score, which precludes finding a larger improvement. As such, the high scores make it difficult to detect the effect of the AWL on grammatical ability. In all three of the writing assignments (assessment and research essays), students scored highest in the grammar and clarity section. This suggests that, upon entering the program, students were most proficient in grammar and clarity. The high scores support the claim that the writing challenges students face are not in the area of grammar (Carroll, 2002). This is not surprising since elements of grammar are taught throughout secondary school and students should be familiar with spelling, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments. Furthermore, high school students commonly receive feedback regarding grammar. Soiferman (2012) found that of Manitoba high school

students surveyed, 21% reported grammar as the primary type of feedback received on essays. The high grammar and clarity scores raise the question as to whether grammar needs to be a component of the AWL.

In each of the three assignments (assessment essays pre- and posttest, and research essay), students scored lowest on the ability to organize a coherent essay. One explanation for the lower organization scores may be differences in expectations. Carroll (2002) argues that what constitutes good essay organization in high school and university differs. In high school, expository essays are common, but in university, students are expected to write academic essays with coherent arguments and evidence to support the claims (Soiferman, 2012; Strachan, 2002). Students have difficulty transitioning from the five-paragraph essay model common in high schools to more complex essays in university (Strachan, 2002). Most of the students in the AWL were in the first year university. The differences in essay expectations between high school and university may account for the low organization and coherence writing scores. Although the mean scores of organization/coherence were the lowest of the writing abilities, there was significant improvement in organizational writing ability from beginning to the end of the program. Furthermore, of the three assignments, the organization score in the research essay was highest. That was somewhat expected as each student had an opportunity to organize his/her writing over time to compete the research essay.

There was no significant improvement in students' ability to structure an essay from beginning to the end of the program. Furthermore, like the students' organizations scores, students' structure scores were also relatively low on both the assessment essays and the research essay. This suggests two things. Firstly, incoming university students have difficulty structuring an essay and formulating an argument. In a review of student essays, Caldwell, et al. (2011) found that incoming students tended not to compose arguments but paraphrased research. Secondly, it suggests that it takes time to develop the skills required to compose an argumentative essay. Johnson et al. (2011) found an increase in overall

student writing ability (grammar, organization, structure) after completing an academic writing course. However, the course in the Johnson et al. (2011) evaluation was a full-semester whereas the AWL was eight sessions. Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2011) only measured the overall writing score; specific writing abilities were not measured. The findings of this study: the low essay structure scores; and small but insignificant increase in ability to structure an essay, highlights the need to devote more time in the AWL to developing this skill.

Studies have shown participation in a full-semester writing course increases writing ability (Goddard, 2003, Johnson et al., 2011). The AWL program; however, was not a full-semester course but an 8-session workshop. However, only 6 sessions were devoted entirely to skill development. The remaining two sessions included elements of student testing. Furthermore, some students were exempt from one or three lab sessions based on their diagnostic test scores. Data from original program evaluation found no significant differences in essay scores between students who were exempt and those who were not. This study did not assess the differences between exempt and non-exempt students. This study has shown that a shorter program contributed to a correspondingly smaller increase in writing ability. This is consistent with Norton and Crowley (1995) who found that attendance in an 8-session academic writing workshop was positively correlated to essay writing ability and predictive of essay scores. The Norton and Crowley study; however, did not measure writing ability prior to participation in the program so it is unclear whether the program had a large or small effect on writing ability. Luttrell et al. (2010) found that while participation in a one-credit hour scientific writing course increased referencing skills, the improvement in the students' essay scores was minimal. Luttrell et al. (2010) suggested that the scientific writing course did improve essay writing ability but the improvement was not detected due differences between the control and experimental groups. Upon examination of the two groups, the experimental group consisted of mostly first year students while the control group was found to consist primarily of upper level students with, presumably, more experience

writing scientific papers. Had the groups been comparable, an improvement in writing skills may have been detected in the experimental group. Regardless, these two programs, along with the AWL program, shows that smaller programs can improve student writing.

In sum, the results of the original CMU program evaluation indicate that the AWL contributed to an increase in two of the students' writing abilities: grammar and clarity; and organization and coherence. From a broader perspective, these findings show that a writing program of even short duration can have a positive effect on students' writing ability. These preliminary findings lay the groundwork to discuss the findings of the four research questions explored in the present study.

Thesis Question Findings

Question 1. Students surveyed at Brock University indicated that the top three skills needed to succeed at university were time management (self-regulation), perseverance (motivation), and writing skills (Learning Skills Services at Brock University, 2011). Relevant to the first research question, students in the AWL program were asked to rate their own levels of motivation, self-regulation, and writing ability at the beginning and the end of the program. The pretest-posttest change in each of these three outcomes was negligible. This was not entirely surprising considering the findings of related studies and other factors.

In contrast to the findings in this study, Royal and Tabor (2008) found increases in perceived motivation and self-regulatory efficacy beliefs after completing a probationary support course. However, the probationary course studied by Royal and Tabor and the AWL differ in multiple ways. The probationary course was a full semester and the AWL was only eight sessions. Furthermore, the probationary course taught academic success strategies such as time management whereas the AWL only focused on writing. Finally, the students were required to take the probationary course because of prior academic difficulty, whereas the AWL students were mostly first-year students not on probation.

Smith, Walter, and Hoey (1992) examined the self-efficacy beliefs of first-year students before and after completing an academic support course. While they found an increase in students' general academic self-efficacy, no difference was found in self-regulation (time management) efficacy after completing an academic support course. Interestingly, the courses in both the Smith et al. (1992) and the present study occurred in the first semester of university. Perhaps one semester is not enough time for students to learn new self-regulatory strategies, enact the strategies, and then alter their beliefs about their own self-regulatory abilities. Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) suggest that students in the early stage of their program are not yet sufficiently aware of their own self-regulatory abilities or the importance of becoming a self-regulated writer.

One interesting finding in this study, which was found also by Pajares and Johnson (1993), is that while students' writing skills improved after they completed the AWL, their perceived level of writing ability did not change significantly. Pajares and Johnson (1993) suggest that although the grades on writing assignments may clearly indicate an improvement in the students' writing ability, perhaps more feedback over a longer period is necessary to convince students that their writing ability has actually improved. Carroll (2002) observed that "often, students did not identify their growing proficiency as 'improvement' in 'writing', which many continued to equate with matters of style and grammar" (p. 126). The fact that the AWL did not specifically teach self-regulatory strategies or discuss the importance of motivation for success may explain why no changes were detected. However, one would expect that after completing a lab dedicated to academic writing that students would be more confident in their writing abilities. Another explanation for the lack of significant improvement in perceived writing ability, self-regulation and motivation may be due to the effects of response shift bias.

Response shift bias may explain the lack of change in self-regulation, motivation, and writing ability beliefs. Response shift bias occurs when a student overestimates his/her ability at pre-test and throughout the program adjusts his/her self-reported abilities at post-test based on information learned

in the program or feedback received (Rohs, 1999). Response shift bias can account for the lack of change in other self-reported beliefs of students such as leadership skills (Rohs, 1999) and social responsibility (Mayhew &Engberg, 2011). In the present study, students may have over-estimated their self-regulatory and writing abilities and their level of motivation at the pre-test. This is consistent with research that has found students over-estimate their academic abilities (Smith, et al., 1992) and use of self-regulation strategies (Young & Ley, 2005). Throughout the term, students would have received feedback in the AWL and other courses and had their abilities tested throughout the semester. Instead of the students' levels of each affective characteristic increasing throughout the term, their post-test scores showed a correction to a more appropriate rating. Research has shown that many students are confident in their writing ability upon entering university but waver in their confidence after receiving assignments back in first semester (Carroll, 2002; Soiferman, 2011). Rohs (1999) argues that a then/post-test self-reported measures approach is more accurate than a pre-test/post-test approach. A then/post-test self-report measure surveys students on a single occasion at the end of the program. The student is asked to report the level of his/her skill both at the beginning of the program (then) and at the end of the program (post-test). Future program evaluations may further test whether response shift bias is occurring by having half the students self-report using a pre-test/post-test measure and half the students self-report using the then/post-test measure.

Question 2. The second question explored in this study was the relationship between writing ability (grammar and clarity, organization and coherence, and structure, and documentation) and CGPA. The correlations revealed three interesting findings. Firstly, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between CGPA and each of the writing abilities measured in both the assessment and research essays. As expected, these correlations indicate that students' writing ability contribute a clear amount toward their overall academic achievement.

Secondly, the correlations between CGPA and the writing abilities measured in the research essay were stronger than the correlations between CGPA and the writing abilities measured in the assessment essay. Perhaps the main implication from this finding is that the research essay may be a more valid measure of writing skills than the assessment essay. The assessment essay was completed within a single session in class, which prompted students to 'think on their feet' in order to complete that essay in a short period of time. In contrast, students completed the research essay outside of class. The greater amount of time that students were given to complete the research essay provided them with more opportunities to engage in the various writing abilities. This is supported further by the fact that the students' scores representing organization/coherence and structure were higher in the research essay than in the assessment essay.

The third finding is the pattern of significant correlations between the different writing skills measured in both the assessment and research essays. Within each essay, the students' scores representing each of the writing skills were significantly related to each other. Interestingly however, the correlations between scores representing the same writing ability across the two essays were weaker (grammar and clarity) or virtually non-existent (organization and coherence, structure). This adds further support to the observation that the research essay may be a more valid measure of the various writing abilities compared to the assessment essay. The high correlations between different writing skills demonstrate the ability of students to complete what Carroll (2012) refers to as complex literary tasks. These literary tasks include developing strong arguments, organizing the flow of arguments and providing research to back up the claims. While all of the correlations were significant, the weakest correlations were found between grammar/clarity and the other writing abilities: organization/coherence, structure, and documentation. The latter three writing abilities were strongly correlated and are examples of complex literary tasks. This suggests complex tasks are related to one another and students with the skills required to complete one complex task are more to possess the

skills required for other complex tasks. Students come in with varying levels of writing abilities but there is some consistency from one skill to the next.

Question 3. The third research question in this study explored the relationship between each affective outcome (motivation, self-regulation, and perceived writing ability) and CGPA. In the present study, significant relationships were found between CGPA and motivation and self-regulation, which concur with the finding of previous studies (Nota, Soresi, & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). Studies have found that prior motivation was both correlated with future academic attainment (Garcia & Pintrich, 1996) and predicted future academic attainment (Ning & Downing, 2010). Similar to the findings of this study, Ning and Downing (2010) found a reciprocal relationship between self-regulation and motivation. Students who were motivated at the beginning of the year maintained more focus and, consequently, employed more self-regulatory strategies than unmotivated students. Conversely, students who employed self-regulation strategies at the beginning of the year were more likely to do better academically and, as a result, were more motivated. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that students who are motivated and self-regulated finish more assignments, study harder, and therefore get better grades. To better understand how these affective qualities influence academic achievement, previous research found self-regulatory efficacy impacted grade attainment indirectly through its effect on academic self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). This indicates that belief in one's ability influences subsequent academic achievement. In addition, academic self-efficacy, as a more general characteristic, is influenced by more specific types of self-efficacy such as, in the present study, self-regulation.

Although it would seem reasonable to expect a positive relationship between CGPA and perceived writing ability, the present study found almost no relationship. One explanation is that ratings of more specific characteristics are likely to be more strongly related to performance in the same specific area than with a more general level (Pajares, 1996). Interestingly, this study found that

perceived writing ability also showed a weak relation with specific writing skills, which themselves, were positively related to CGPA. As mentioned earlier, the relation between perceived writing ability and performance on the different types of writing might have been stronger if the AWL lasted longer and the students received feedback more frequently. Assuming that many students may not yet have known their CGPAs by the time they completed the AWL, the students' estimated level of perceived writing ability may be less accurate as they had less information on their writing ability and academic performance.

Question 4. The final question addressed the relationship between each type of writing ability and each affective outcome. Most of the correlations between motivation and each of the writing abilities in the assessment and research essays were not significant. This is somewhat surprising because the items used in this study to measure motivation referred specifically to writing rather than a general level of motivation toward overall academic performance. In this study, the mean level of student motivation was close to the middle of the range that went from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This suggests that many of these students were somewhat unsure of their level of motivation toward writing, perhaps because they did not yet have much feedback yet to confirm their levels of writing ability. This exemplifies the reciprocal relation between motivation and achievement as described by Marsh and Martin (2011). For example, a student could be motivated to study many hours leading to obtaining higher grades, which in turn, encourages greater motivation. If the AWL lasted longer than eight weeks, then perhaps students would have received feedback on more occasions, which may then have influenced their subsequent levels of motivation.

A significant relationship was found between self-regulation and all four types of writing abilities measured from the research essay. This finding is consistent with previous research that self-regulation beliefs correlate with writing ability (Zimmerman et al., 1992; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). To write a well-written essay requires students to research sources, compose strong arguments, clarify structure,

and edit for grammatical errors. The research essay was composed outside of class, requiring students to self-schedule a sufficient amount of time to complete the essay. Students with high self-regulatory efficacy produced a stronger paper. The relationship between self-regulation and writing abilities in the assessment essay was mixed. No relationship was found between self-regulation and two of the assessment essay writing abilities measured: grammar and clarity; organization and coherence. Students were required to complete the assessment essay within a single class; that precluded students from the opportunity to use any amount of self-regulation.

As noted above, the present study found that students' perceived writing abilities had no significant correlations with any of the writing abilities, except for organization and coherence in the research essay. This is contrary to other studies in which writing self-efficacy belief has been shown to correlate with actual writing ability (Pajares, 2003) and to predict future writing ability (Pajares & Johnson, 1993). One possibility, already discussed above, is that students may have difficulty evaluating their own writing ability. It may be that students more accurately rate their own ability when comparing themselves to their classmates. One AWL session focused on self- and peer-editing; thus giving students' the opportunity to critique others' work. The original CMU program evaluation questionnaire asked students to rate their own writing skills compared to their classmates. This item was found to positively correlate with two writing abilities on the assessment essay: grammar and clarity; and structure. This suggests that, initially, students may have more accuracy when assessing their writing abilities relative to peers versus their individual abilities. Another explanation for the lack of correlations between perceived writing abilities and two performance measures: actual writing ability and CGPA, may be a result of the affective outcome measure itself. The scores assigned to each of the writing abilities were clearly defined by the Essay Grading Rubric. The scores assigned to each of the affective characteristics were not as clearly defined because the weight of each number on the 7-point Likert-scale was not

articulated. Students may have interpreted the scale in different ways; thereby, leading to less accurate ratings of their own abilities. This will be addressed further when discussing limitations of the study.

Limitations

Program evaluation is conducted in real life settings under real conditions. As such, conditions are often unfavourable to controlled experimental conditions. This often compels evaluators to use a less rigorous design (Rossi et al., 2004). Perhaps the main limitation of this study is the absence of a control group. The current study used both a single-group pretest-postest and a correlational design. Although this study was able to measure how much the students changed in their levels of writing skills and affective characteristics over the duration of the AWL, it is difficult to confirm how much these changes occurred as a result of the AWL. A control group, not enrolled in the AWL, would have been helpful to determine how much of the improvement in writing ability was a result of participation in the AWL and how much of the improvement was a result of other factors such as maturation.

A second limitation may be the use of the 30-minute assessment essays to measure writing ability. Carroll (2002) argues that a timed essay on a generic topic, such as the assessment essay used in this study, is not a good measure of writing ability because it assesses only one form of essay writing. It does not assess the more complex literacy tasks such as researching, reading, analyzing, and compiling information as required in the research essay, and more typical of university writing assignments. Students who can formulate arguments quickly and clearly using simple essay structures do well on in-class essays (Langer, Stotsky, Hayes, & Purves, 1988). Pajares and Johnson (1993) recognize the limitations of a timed essay but argue that it is still a can be a valuable measure of writing ability when there are standardized measures in place. While both the assessment essay and the research essay have merit as assessment tools, the research essay provided a better measure of writing ability. In the present study, the variability of the scores on the writing abilities in the assessment essay was smaller compared to those of the research essay. It is possible that the assessment essay did not capture the

full range of students' writing ability levels as well as the research essay, which would also explain why the writing ability scores of the assessment essay had weaker correlations with the affective characteristics compared to the research essay. The research essay was a better example of student writing ability because the larger scope of the writing assignment and additional time provided a greater "opportunity to learn" (Langer, et al., 1988). Students were able to practice and enact the skills taught in the AWL to a greater extent than what was possible in the assessment essay. Furthermore, the research essay was a graded assignment for another course whereas the assessment essays did not contribute to the overall grade. The graded aspect of the research essay may have factored into the amount of effort students invested in the paper.

A third limitation may be the lack of clarity of the affective characteristics measure, which questions the accuracy of the scores. The measure asked students to respond to 25 statements using a 7 point Likert-scale in which 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Numbers 2-6 on the Likert-scale did not have descriptions. It was up to the participant to decide on his/her own what a particular number on the scale might reflect. For example, one statement on the measure is "I can write very effective transitional sentences from one idea to another". Students may have been unsure about the quantifiable difference between a 4 and a 5. Perhaps more appropriate descriptions for the Likert-scale would be 1 = none of the time, 4 = 50% of the time, and 7 = 100% of the time. Using percentage points makes the meaning of each number on the scale more tangible. In this case, a 4 = 50% and 5 = 67%. Clearer Likert-scale descriptors may have captured the students' levels of their own motivation, self-regulatory ability, and writing ability more accurately.

Implications

How much could a university reasonably expect a program like the AWL to improve academic achievement and reduce dropout? Based on past experience with similar programs, it is reasonable to expect that students who complete these programs can indeed benefit from the feedback and practice

they would not receive in regular coursework (Carroll, 2002; Smith et al., 1992). The AWL serves a similar function. Despite the short duration of the AWL, the students improved in some aspects of writing ability. When thinking about how much of an improvement is reasonable to expect from a shorter program, it is important to keep in mind that the amount of improvement is likely tied to the amount of the program (Prentice & Miller, 1992). This is a short program, only eight lab sessions; therefore, a large improvement should not be expected. Many of the effects of the AWL, such as increases in ability to organize and structure an essay, although small, and perhaps not statistically significant, could still be considered noteworthy considering the short duration of the AWL. While the smaller gains may not be as important for students who perform above the minimal level, for other students who have difficulty meeting the academic standard within a post-secondary institution, an improvement as little as 5% could mean the difference between progressing into the next year or withdrawing from the program.

Future Program Directions

Based on the findings of the present study, the AWL should focus less on grammar, and focus greater attention on the more complex literary tasks. Carroll (2002) asserts that writing programs for first-year university students should emphasize what could be considered higher-level writing skills that are usually covered less in high school. These skills might include identifying different assignment types, researching appropriate sources of information, reading and understanding the information, and incorporating new concepts into practice. A similar suggestion is that the AWL would introduce students to the varied types of organization and structure required in different disciplines at university (Caldwell, et. al., 2011). Rather than cementing the five-paragraph essay format, the AWL would open the minds of first-year students to the possibilities of writing styles common in different disciplines such as argumentative essays, research papers, book reports, literature reviews, and case studies. Given that the AWL is an 8-session lab, there would not be time to go into depth on each of the many writing

assignments that students may be expected to master at university. One idea would be to describe and give examples of each style and students' would complete an assignment in the style of their choice. This would give the opportunity for practice in a style common in the students' major of study. The AWL should serve as a launching point to develop students' academic writing abilities but it should not end there.

A next step would be to take the longer view of writing development and implement a writing program for students throughout the university career. Carroll (2002) asserts that a first-year academic writing course is not a place to perfect writing skills but a launching point for the university career and argues that an upper-level writing requirement be added to the university curriculum. Unlike the more general academic writing lab, the upper level course would be discipline specific. There is some evidence to back up the claim that an upper level writing requirement is effective. Kokaliari et. al. (2012) implemented a four-year academic writing program and found an increase in student writing ability after program implementation. Furthermore, they were able to demonstrate a relationship between number of years in the writing program and writing ability. Students in the program for three or four years had significantly higher writing scores than students in the program for fewer than three years. An upper level course would ensure a continued focus on enhancing students' writing skills.

Another option would be to add elements in the AWL program that addresses motivation, self-regulation skills, writing self-efficacy. Walker (2010) highlights 12 ways to enhance students' beliefs in their reading and writing abilities in a classroom context. Two of the suggestions are most applicable in the context of the eight-session AWL program. The first is the use of writing strategy checklists to aid in self-regulation that is specific to writing tasks. The second suggestion is that the AWL instructor would highlight in class and in student work when specific writing strategies are used. This would help the student to recognize his/her own writing skills and aid in the improvement of writing self-efficacy. In order to determine whether these changes increase self-regulation and writing self-efficacy, the changes

could be implemented in only half of the AWL course sections in the first year. The course sections without the changes would serve as a control group. Self-regulation and writing self-efficacy would be measured in both groups before and after the AWL to see whether implementation of the checklist affected self-regulation. Showing that the students who completed the revised AWL showed larger gains in the expected outcomes compared to students in a control group who did not compete the AWL would provide stronger evidence on the impact of the AWL, which would better support revising applicable parts of the AWL.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the AWL could be considered at least moderately successful as students showed an improvement in some of the intended outcomes. The results of this study, along with previous studies, provide clear support for the inclusion of a writing program to help students who are entering university. At a broader level, this study reiterates the need for programs like the AWL, and many other programs within post-secondary institutions, to be evaluated to provide an indication of how well students have benefitted from the program, and what parts of the program might be improved.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Data for Research Purposes

SUBJECT LINE: Permission to Use Data obtained from Canadian Mennonite University's program evaluation of the Academic Writing Lab

Attention: Wesley Toews, Registrar and Assistant VP Academic, Canadian Mennonite University

I am requesting permission to include in my graduate thesis the following:

> All the Quantitative Data obtained from Canadian Mennonite University's evaluation of the Academic Writing Lab program. This data includes the following: student assessment essays, diagnostic tests, student self-assessment surveys, student evaluation survyes, student research essays, instructor evaluation surveys, and the instructor interview. In addition, I would like to include year-to-date grade point averages data for all students who participated in the academic writing lab.

My thesis, entitled Evaluation of an Academic Writing Program, is part of the requirements needed to graduate from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Manitoba.

My thesis will be posted electronically and will be accessible for free to a worldwide audience from the University of Manitoba's digital repository called MSpace located at http://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/index.jsp. I do not expect any commercial profits from my thesis.

Please reply to confirm if you are the copyright owner of the work and if permission is granted to include it in my thesis. A permission statement will appear with the work.

If you do not control the copyright on the above-mentioned work, I would appreciate any contact information you can provide regarding the proper rights holder.

Thank you for your consideration. If you require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Stephanie Penner, B.A.
Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba
[redacted]

I, [redacted], give permission to use the above data for the purposes of gradudate thesis research.

[redacted] June/5/2013

Signature Date

Appendix B: Academic Writing Lab Syllabus

ACWR 0900 – Academic Writing Lab
Syllabus – Fall semester, 2012-13
E. Peterson, Office C05 (Sessional office, south campus)

Rationale
The Academic Writing Lab is designed to assist students in the ongoing process of developing skills in **writing and in research**. Students will access resources that will result in greater confidence and increased skills in writing and research for university and beyond.

- **As writers**, students will explore topics such as appropriate tone for academic writing, clarity of expression, clear sentence structure, and principles of grammar. In the final sessions, students will learn how to examine their own essays critically by using rubrics and checklists.
- **As researchers**, students will examine the principles of writing with academic integrity and accuracy. Topics will include documentation (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) and its challenges; how to pose effective research questions and thesis statements; how to benefit from the library in order to find and evaluate appropriate resources; how to integrate sources to avoid plagiarism.

Lab Objectives
- to master the process and components of **effective academic writing**
- to gain a thorough understanding of and appreciation for **effective research**
- **to develop excellent research and writing skills**, using in-class resources and textbook references/resources

Textbook
Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*, 5th edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

Lab Requirements
- Completion of the Diagnostic Assessment during Session 1
- Attendance in ACWR sessions 1,2,3, 4 and 8.
- Attendance in ACWR sessions 5, 6, and 7 if the instructor requires it on the basis of the results of the Diagnostic Assessment.
  NOTE: *All students are welcome to attend any or all of Sessions 5 through 7.*
- Submission of a paper copy of research essay, due on the same date given by the professor in the linked course.

Students must achieve a "Pass" (P) in order to complete the ACWR lab requirement.
This standing is based on:

- Attendance in ACWR sessions 1,2,3, 4 and 8
- Attendance in ACWR sessions, 5,6, and 7 as required by the instructor, based on the results of the Diagnostic Assessment.
- An acceptable/satisfactory level of writing and research skills in the essay submitted to the instructor. The essay MUST include documentation. Students who fail the essay component of the ACWR lab will be required to do one or more of the following:
  - Revise the essay to an acceptable standard, and submit it to the Academic Writing Lab Instructor (due date to be determined)
  - Repeat the Academic Writing Lab the following semester
  - Enroll in ACWR 1010 *Writing for Academic Purposes*

Transcripts will indicate performance in ACWR lab as P (Pass) or I (Incomplete). An Incomplete grade will necessitate that the student repeats the ACWR lab the next semester OR takes ACWR 1010 *Writing for Academic Purposes* the next semester.

→ see reverse

Office Hours and Extra Help

I am available to advise students on any writing assignments. Please contact me in person or by e-mail for an appointment.
Office hours: Tuesday (2:30-4:00), Friday (12:00-2:00)
Email: [redacted]

Outline of ACWR lab sessions:

Session 1: *Introductory Session*
Syllabus
Explanation of Program Review
Diagnostic Assessment, Survey, and Essay

Session 2: *Writing skills at the University level*
Types of writing assignments (research paper, book review, journal); best practices in writing; university "tone"

Session 3: *Research skills – Documentation and its challenges*
How to use MLA, APA and Chicago documentation. In research: how to integrate quotations, paraphrases, and summaries into writing to avoid plagiarism.

Session 4: *Research skills – CMU Library resources presented by Library Staff*
A three-part presentation, beginning in the ACWR lab classroom.

Session 5: *Research skills – Writing Well: Construction of the Research Essay*
Effective thesis statements; introductions and conclusions; coherence and organization; models of writing.

Session 6: *Writing skills – Sentence Structure and Style: Grammar Revisited*
Parallel structure, modifiers, run-on sentences and sentence fragments, and so on.

Session 7: *Writing and Research skills – The Final Product: Cultivating a Critical Eye*
Students will bring an essay or portion thereof for self-editing and peer editing using rubrics and checklists provided by instructor. Sample essays will also be available for instruction and evaluation.

Session 8: *Course and Program Evaluation*
Final Assessment, Course Program Evaluation
Reminder re: handing in linked-course essay

Class Meeting Times – Fall 2012

ACWR 0900 Section 1 Tues 10:05 to 11:20	ACWR 0900 Section 2 Tues 1:00 to 2:15	ACWR 0900 Section 3 Fri 10:05 to 11:20	ACWR 0900 Section 4 Fri 2:30 to 3:45
Session 1: Sept 11	Session 1: Sept 11	Session 1: Sept 14	Session 1: Sept 14
Session 2: Sept 18	Session 2: Sept 18	Session 2: Sept 21	Session 2: Sept 21
Session 3: Sept 25	Session 3: Sept 25	Session 3: Sept 28	Session 3: Sept 28
Session 4: Oct 2	Session 4: Oct 2	Session 4: Oct 5	Session 4: Oct 5
Session 5: Oct 9	Session 5: Oct 9	Session 5: Oct 12	Session 5: Oct 12
Session 6: Oct 16	Session 6: Oct 16	Session 6: Oct 19	Session 6: Oct 19
Session 7: Oct 23	Session 7: Oct 23	Session 7: Oct 26	Session 7: Oct 26
Session 8: Oct 30	Session 8: Oct 30	Session 8: Nov 2	Session 8: Nov 2

Appendix C: Program Evaluation Information Sheet

Academic Writing Lab Program Review Information

Program Reviewer: Stephanie Penner

At CMU we want to ensure that the academic writing program is best serving you, the students.

2012-13 will be the third year that Canadian Mennonite University is running the Academic Writing Lab program in its current format. As such, the academic office at CMU has commissioned a review of the Academic Writing Lab to determine if the program is meeting its intended goals.

The review will be collecting the following information:

- Student writing samples: beginning and end of program
- Student population characteristics
- Student Evaluations of the program
- Faculty Evaluations of the program

Upon completion of the program review, a report will be compiled and presented to the CMU Academic Office. **Only collective, not individual, data will be shared in the final report.** All references to specific persons will be removed. After the report is completed, collective data will be used for further research purposes.

If you have any questions regarding the review process, please contact Stephanie Penner at [redacted](put "Academic Writing Program Review" in Subject field).

Appendix D: Essay Grading Rubric

Student Name_____ Essay Due Date_____

Name of Professor_____ Linked Course_____

Instructions: Read each comment carefully and circle the number that best applies.

Part A – Grammar and Clarity

1. There are no run-ons.	1	2	3	4
2. There are no fragments.	1	2	3	4
3. There are no unclear modifiers (dangling or misplaced).	1	2	3	4
4. Spelling is accurate.	1	2	3	4
5. Sentences vary in length.	1	2	3	4
6. There are no contractions.	1	2	3	4

Score _____

Part B – Organization and Coherence

1. Coherence is used effectively in each paragraph.	1	2	3	4
2. Each paragraph contains no more than one main idea that is easily identified as such.	1	2	3	4
3. Each main idea can be traced back directly to thesis statement	1	2	3	4
4. Each detail obviously supports main idea it follows.	1	2	3	4
5. Main ideas are placed in logical order – from least important to most important.	1	2	3	4
6. Transition words and phrases are used to connect ideas and to ensure coherence.	1	2	3	4

Score _____

Part C – Thesis Statement, Introduction & conclusion

1. The thesis statement is readily identified in the Introduction. 1 2 3 4

2. The thesis statement clearly identifies the main points that will be developed in the paper (is specific, not vague). 1 2 3 4

3. The thesis statement is challenging (not bland). 1 2 3 4

4. The introductory paragraph begins with a statement which attracts readers' attention in an appropriate way ('grabber'). The concluding paragraph ends on a thought provoking note (‘clincher’). 1 2 3 4

5. The thesis statement is readily identified in the conclusion. 1 2 3 4

6. The conclusion successfully summarizes or restates the argument of the essay without sounding repetitious. 1 2 3 4

Score _____

Part D – Documentation

*** Circle documentation style used: MLA APA Chicago

1. The documentation style (MLA, APA, Chicago) is obvious and consistent throughout the document. 1 2 3 4

2. Sources are cited on separate page at end of essay and are in Alphabetical order (by last name). 1 2 3 4

1. Sources are properly formatted. 1 2 3 4

2. In-text citations are accurate and properly formatted. 1 2 3 4

3. Quotations are accurate and are integrated appropriately. 1 2 3 4

4. Summaries and paraphrases are cited to avoid plagiarism. 1 2 3 4

Score _____

Comments:_____

_____

Score _____

Appendix E: ACWR Research Essay Rubric Checklist

The Essay rubric makes reference to the textbook *A Pocket Style Manual* used in the academic writing lab.

Hacker, D., Sommers, N., Jehn, T., & Rosenzweig, J. (2009). *A Pocket Style Manual* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Rubrics

1=	unsatisfactory	0-49%
2=	adequate or satisfactory	50-64%
3=	average or moderate	65-79%
4=	superior or excellent	80-100%

Part A: Grammar and Clarity

1. There are no run-ons
   - 0-1 run-ons = score of 4
   - 2-4 run-ons = score of 3
   - 5-7 run-ons = score of 2
   - 8 + run-ons = score of 1

   *Run-on sentences are independent clauses that have not been joined correctly. Refer to section #15 of *A Pocket Style Manual* for examples of run-on sentences.

2. There are no fragments
   - 0-1 fragments =score of 4
   - 2-4 fragments =score of 3
   - 5-7 fragments =-score of 2
   - 8+ fragments = score of 1

   * A fragment is an incomplete sentence. A complete sentence must contain a subject and a verb. Refer to section #14 of *A Pocket Style Manual* for examples of sentence fragments.

3. There are no unclear modifiers (dangling or misplaced)
   - 0-1 unclear modifiers = score of 4
   - 2-4 unclear modifiers = score of 3
   - 5-7 unclear modifiers = score of 2
   - 8+ unclear modifiers = score of 1

   * Refer to section #7 of *A Pocket Style Manual* for examples of misplaced and dangling modifiers

4. Spelling is accurate
   - 0-3 spelling mistakes= score of 4

4-7 spelling mistakes = score of 3
8-10 spelling mistakes =score of 2
11+ spelling mistakes = score of 1

*If same word is misspelled more than once, penalize only once. Both British and American spellings are acceptable.

5. Sentences vary in length

Excellent variety = score of 4
Variety often used= score of 3
Variety sometimes used = score of 2
Little or no variety =score of 1

* Refer to section #8 of *A Pocket Style Manual* for information on sentence variation.

6. There are no contractions

0-3 contractions = score of 4
4-7 contractions = score of 3
8-10 contractions =score of 2
11+ contractions = score of 1

*If same contraction is used more than once, penalize only once.

Part B Organization and Coherence

4 = always
3 = often
2= sometimes
1= rarely/never

These comments can be applied to each of 6 points in Part B.

1. Coherence is used effectively in each paragraph.

2. Each paragraph contains no more than one main idea that is easily identified as such.

3. Each main idea can be traced back directly to thesis statement.

4. Each detail obviously supports main idea it follows.

5. Main ideas are placed in logical order – from least important to most important.

6. Transition words and phrases are used to connect ideas and to ensure coherence.
Transitions of Summary or Conclusion: finally, in conclusion, in effect, in short, in summary, so, subsequently, that is, therefore, thus, to summarize

Transitions of Contrast: after all, although, but, by contrast, conversely, despite, even so, however, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the one hand...on the other hand, otherwise, rather (than), regardless, still, though, whereas, while, yet
Transitions of Emphasis: above all, assuredly, certainly, especially, indeed, in effect, in fact, particularly, that is, then undoubtedly
Transitions of Cause and Effect: accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this reason, if, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thus
Transitions of Sequence and Addition: after, again, also, and as well, and then, besides, eventually, finally, first...second...third, furthermore, in addition, likewise, next, moreover, or, similarly, too, while
Transitions of Illustration: after all, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, in other words, of course, specifically, such as

Adapted from Henderson, *The Empowered Writer* (Oxford University Press Canada 2010)

Part C: Thesis statement, introduction and conclusion

4 = excellent
3 = average/moderate
2 = adequate or satisfactory
1 = unsatisfactory or inadequate

1. The thesis statement is readily identified in the introduction.

2. The thesis statement clearly identifies the main points that will be developed in the paper (is specific, not vague).

3. The thesis statement is challenging (not bland).

4. The introductory paragraph begins with a statement which attracts readers' attention in an appropriate way (has a 'grabber'). The concluding paragraph ends on a thought provoking note (has a 'clincher')

5. The thesis statement is readily identified in the conclusion.

6. The conclusion successfully summarizes or restates the argument of the essay without sounding repetitious.

Examples of Thesis Statements

a) On October 16, 1846, observers of the first surgery performed on a person anesthetized with ether were astonished when the patient neither screamed nor seemed aware of any pain.
Score -1: unsatisfactory because it states a fact: this would be an appropriate detail to support a main idea.

b) The development of general anesthesia made modern surgery possible, for it allowed surgeons to work slowly and carefully for the first time.
Score- 4

c) The electoral college system was developed in the eighteenth century under circumstances much different from those facing the country today.
Score-2: Statement is too vague

d) The electoral college, which was created in the eighteenth century to solve the problem of voters' lack of knowledge about candidates from other states, never worked as the framers of the Constitution intended.
Score- 4: complex and challenging

Example of Thesis statement, introduction and conclusion for Part C

Introduction

The *Martyrs' Mirror* is a collection of powerful narratives that vividly tell the stories of Christian martyrs, the majority of which focus on the stories of sixteenth century Anabaptist martyrs. Of the 1007 people identified in the *Martyrs' Mirror*, 288 are women, while another 661 martyrs are not identified by gender. Women are not merely mentioned in the *Martyrs' Mirror. "*The book gives us reports of what women actually did, said, and wrote when they were confronted with a martyr's death." These women are portrayed as strong, independent women of conviction whose choices were not controlled by their husbands. They had chosen their faith with a full awareness of the suffering that potentially accompanied that choice. Anabaptist women were courageous and seemingly fearless as they lived out their faith with bold acts that put them at significant risk of arrest and potential execution. Even when given the opportunity to escape, these female martyrs would stand their ground and openly accept torture and execution rather than compromise their convictions and witness. **Anabaptist women were pivotal players in the unfolding drama of suffering and martyrdom in the sixteenth century. Like the Anabaptist men of that time, they influenced the direction of history, and left a significant spiritual legacy that continues to influence the Christian faith to this day.**

Conclusion

Women played a significant role in the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century. Their determination and courage were a clear witness to endure anything, even death, for the sake of their faith. **By courageously facing persecution and torture, resisting the urge to flee from authorities, and boldly proclaiming their faith until their moment of death, their witness significantly shaped the sixteenth century world**. Their actions have left a powerful legacy that continues to inspire the church today to consider what it means to proclaim and live a faith that challenges many of the assumptions of our society. It is time that the Church

acknowledges the debt we owe to the courageous women of the sixteenth century Anabaptist movement.

Notes for Part C assessment:

This is an example of a score of '4'

In the Introduction, the thesis statement is readily identified (last 2 sentences).

Main ideas are specific: *women are pivotal players, influenced the direction of history, left a significant spiritual legacy.*

Thesis statement is challenging: word choices, complex sentence structure..

Facts from *Martyrs' Mirror* give good information and provide a solid basis for thesis statement.(excellent 'grabber')

Conclusion contains an effective 'clincher'. Thesis statement is restated but not repeated. Ideas are restated to reinforce impact of main ideas introduced in first paragraph.

Part D: Documentation

Failure to submit documentation results in no grade until documentation is submitted.

Rubric for 1, 2, and 3:

Excellent	= 4
average / moderate = 3	
adequate or satisfactory	= 2
unsatisfactory	= 1

1. The documentation style (MLA/APA/Chicago) is obvious and consistent throughout the document.

   * Refer to *A Pocket Style Manual* for proper documentation styles.

2. Sources are cited on single page at end of essay and are in alphabetical order
   Check for: source on single page and alphabetical order (by last name)

3. Sources are properly formatted:
   Check for: format follows that used in Hacker Manual for pertinent documentation style / proper indentation is used / accuracy in spacing (refer to Directory in Hacker Manual)

Rubric for 4, 5, and 6

Always = 4
Often = 3
Sometimes = 2
Rarely/ never = 1

4. In-text citations are accurate and properly formatted
   Check for: accuracy that is pertinent to documentation style used-refer to "Documentation style" chapter in Hacker manual (sections 32, 37 and 42)
5. Quotations are accurate and are integrated appropriately
   Check for use of signal phrases as pertains to each relevant documentation style as indicated in Hacker Manual (sections 31, 36, 41)

6. Summaries and paraphrases are cited to avoid plagiarism
   Refer to Hacker Manual (sections 29, 35 and 40) to check for plagiarism
   * Refer to *A Pocket Style Manual* for information regarding plagiarism.

Example of a poorly constructed documentation Page. Score- 1

Josephus Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews (93)

.Keil, Carl Friedrich: Biblical commentary on the Old Testament; The twelve minor prophets (1868)

Mark J. Boda & Gordon T. Smith, Editors, Repentance in Christiona Theology (Collegeville. minn; Liturgical press, c. 2006).

Lee Martin McDonald: The Biblical Canon: its origin, transmission and authority, (c.2007).

Jerry L. Sumney: The Bible An Introduction (c2010)

A, Co London: The twelve prophets; Hebrew and English Translation/Introductions and Commentary, (soncino press, 1948,1966)

Alexandrian Jew: The Third Book of Maccabees (30 cm).

Example of a well-constructed documentation Page. Score- 4

References

Boylan, H.R., Bonham, B.S., & White, S.R. (1999). Developmental and remedial education in postsecondary education. *New Directions for Higher Education, 108,* 87-101.

Clark, M. H., & Cundiff, N. L. (2011). Assessing the effectiveness of a college freshman seminar using propensity score adjustments. *Research in Higher Education, 52*(6), 616-616-639.

Kirby, D., & Sharpe, D. (2001). Student attrition from newfoundland and labrador's public college. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 47*(4), 353-368.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How College Affects Students: A Third Decade of Research.* San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix F: Assessment Essay

Essay Assignment Version A

Student Name: _____ **ACWR-0900 Section:** _____

Prompt:

The following excerpt is meant to introduce the essay topic and to give background to the issue. It is meant to provoke thought, not to position one argument as more valid than the other.

> *In many circumstances, optimism—the expectation that one's ideas and plans will always turn out for the best—is unwarranted. In these situations what is needed is not an upbeat view but a realistic one. There are times when people need to take a tough-minded view of the possibilities of success, give up, and invest their energies elsewhere rather than find reasons to continue to pursue the original project or idea.*
>
> Adapted from Martin E. P. Seligman, Learned Optimism

Essay Question:

Is it better for people to be realistic or optimistic?

Instructions:

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on the above essay question. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Your essay will be scored according to its overall effectiveness and based on the following features:

-well-focused main points

-clear organization

-specific development of your ideas

-control of sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and spelling

Appendix G: Assessment Essay

Essay Assignment Version B

Student Name: _____ **ACWR-0900 Section:** _____

Prompt:

The following excerpt is meant to introduce the essay topic and to give background to the issue. It is meant to provoke thought, not to position one argument as more valid than the other.

> *Abraham Lincoln said, "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." In other words, our personal level of satisfaction is entirely within our control. Otherwise, why would the same experience disappoint one person but delight another? Happiness is not an accident but a choice.*

Essay Question:

Is happiness something over which people have no control, or can people choose to be happy?

Instructions:

Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on the above essay question. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Your essay will be scored according to its overall effectiveness and based on the following features:

-well-focused main points

-clear organization

-specific development of your ideas

-control of sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, word choice, and spelling

Appendix H: Self-Assessment Survey

Student Self-Assessment Survey
Student Name: _____ **ACWR-0900 Section:** _____

Rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7.

1 Strongly Disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

1. When given a specific writing assignment, I can come up with a suitable topic in a short time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I can start writing with no difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I can construct a good opening sentence quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I can come up with an unusual opening paragraph to capture readers' interest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I can write a brief but informative overview that will prepare readers well for the main thesis of my paper.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I can use my first attempts at writing to refine my ideas on a topic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I can adjust my style of writing to suit the needs of any audience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I can find a way to concentrate on my writing even when there are many distractions around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. When I have a pressing deadline on a paper, I can manage my time efficiently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I can meet the writing standards of an evaluator who is very demanding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I can come up with memorable examples quickly to illustrate an important point.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I can rewrite my wordy or confusing sentences clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. When I need to make a subtle or an abstract idea more imaginable, I can use words to create a vivid picture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I can locate and use appropriate reference sources when I need to document an important point.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I can write very effective transitional sentences from one idea to another.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I can refocus my concentration on writing when I find myself thinking about other things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. When I write on a lengthy topic, I can create a variety of good outlines for the main sections of my paper.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. When I want to persuade a skeptical reader about a point, I can come up with a convincing quote from an authority.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. When I get stuck writing a paper, I can find ways to overcome the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I can find ways to motivate myself to write a paper even when the topic holds little interest for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. When I have written a long or complex paper, I can find and correct all my grammatical errors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I can revise a first draft of any paper so that it is shorter and better organized.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. When I edit a complex paper, I can find and correct all my grammatical errors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I can find other people who will give critical feedback on early drafts of my paper.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25. When my paper is written on a complicated topic, I can come up with a short informative title.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Compared to my classmates, I would rate my writing skills as:

1. Poor
2. Below Average
3. Average
4. Above Average
5. Exceptional

At University, I expect to get the following grades

1. Poor Grades (D's and F's)
2. Adequate Grades (C's and C+'s)
3. Good Grades (B's and B+'s)
4. Excellent Grades (A's and A+'s)

Table 1

Program Evaluations and Related Goals and Outcomes (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004)

Evaluation Type	Goal	Outcome
Needs Assessment	Identify problems that need to be addressed through programming	Determine need for addition programming or whether existing program should continue or change
Process Evaluation	Identify issues related to service delivery or program implementation and target audience	Quality assurance. Determine whether existing program is being delivered effectively and efficiently
Outcome Evaluation	Identify whether the program is meeting objectives and producing desired outcomes	Determine whether program goals are being met

Table 2

Comparison of Different Academic Writing Programs

Writing Program Type	Student Population	Length of Program	Credit Value	Participation	Program Components
Remedial Writing Courses (Leake & Lesik, 2007)	Students with low academic writing ability	Full semester course	For academic credit	Mandatory	Grammar Mechanics of writing Essay structure
Discipline-Specific Courses (Goddard, 2003; Luttrell et al., 2010)	Students in a specific academic program regardless of academic writing ability	Full semester course or a component of an existing course	May or may not be for academic credit	Mandatory or Optional	Grammar Essay Structure Discipline-specific writing styles Documentation Research Skills
Academic Workshops, labs, and Seminars (Norton & Crowley, 1995)	All students. Not restricted by academic writing ability	Vary in length. One or multiple sessions	Not for academic credit	Optional	Essay Structure Grammar Mechanics of writing
Academic Writing Lab at CMU	First year students with moderate academic writing abilities	8-week workshop	Not for academic credit	Mandatory	Grammar Mechanics of writing Essay structure Documentation Self & Peer Editing

Table 3

Essay Writing Ability Scores of Students Before and After Completing the AWL

	Pre-Essay		Post-Essay				
Writing Abilities	M	SD	M	SD	*t*(110)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Grammar/Clarity	20.97	1.94	21.91	1.55	5.69	<.001	-.54
Organization/Coherence	13.73	4.57	14.99	4.47	2.51	.013	-.24
Structure	15.35	3.61	16.09	3.84	1.77	.08	-.22
Total	50.05	8.14	52.99	8.20	3.35	.001	-.32

Table 4

Comparison of Writing Ability Scores of two Versions of the Essay Assignment

	Essay A Optimism		Essay B Happiness					
Writing Abilities	M	SD	M	SD	*df*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
			Pre-Essay					
Grammar/Clarity	21.19	1.82	20.90	1.95	120	.82	.41	.15
Organization/Coherence	14.03	4.37	13.56	4.69	120	.58	.56	.10
Structure	15.83	3.30	14.89	3.72	120	1.48	.14	.27
Total	51.05	7.55	49.35	8.36	120	1.18	.24	.21
			Post-Essay					
Grammar/Clarity	21.81	1.48	22.02	1.62	109	.71	.48	.13
Organization/Coherence	14.97	4.13	15.02	4.85	109	.06	.95	.01
Structure	16.40	4.08	15.75	3.57	109	.88	.38	.17
Total	53.17	8.27	52.79	8.20	109	.24	.81	.05

Table 5

Mean Writing Ability Scores and Standard Deviations for Students on the Research Essay Assignment

	Research Essay	
Writing Ability	M	SD
Grammar/Clarity	21.77	2.06
Organization/Coherence	15.74	5.70
Structure	17.07	5.08
Documentation	19.58	3.28
Total	74.17	12.62

Table 6

Affective Characteristic Scores of Students Before and After Completing the AWL

	Pre-Test		Post-Test					
Affective Characteristics	M	SD	M	SD	*df*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Motivation	22.86	5.22	22.01	5.39	105	1.79	.08	.17
Self-regulation	48.25	7.61	48.02	7.56	102	.33	.74	.03
Writing ability	45.75	8.43	46.52	7.91	97	-1.08	.28	-.11

Table 7

Correlations between CGPA and Writing Abilities as Measured by Assessment Essay (AE) and Research Essay (RE)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. CGPA	-							
2. AE Grammar/Clarity	.22*	-						
3. AE Organization/Coherence	.25*	.20*	-					
4. AE Structure	.26*	.24*	.74**	-				
5. RE Grammar/Clarity	.36**	.24*	.20*	.21*	-			
6. RE Organization/Coherence	.36**	.15	-.01	.04	.28*	-		
7. RE Structure	.37**	.01	.07	.04	.25*	.64**	-	
8. RE Documentation	.52**	.30*	.21*	.20*	.20*	.52**	.44*	-

*p<.05. ** p<.001

Table 8

Correlations between CGPA and Affective Characteristics

	1	2	3	4
1. CGPA	-			
2. Motivation	.33*	-		
3. Self-Regulation	.23*	.66**	-	
4. Writing Ability	.09	.60**	.70**	-

*p<.05. ** p<.001

Table 9

Correlations between Affective Characteristics and Writing Abilities

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Motivation	-									
2. Self-Regulation	.66**	-								
3. Writing Ability	.60**	.70**	-							
4. AE Grammar/Clarity	-.02	.13	.02	-						
5. AE Organization/Coherence	.16	.13	.05	.20*	-					
6. AE Structure	.24*	.21*	.08	.24*	.74**	-				
7. RE Grammar/Clarity	.09	.23*	.11	.24*	.20*	.21*	-			
8. RE Organization/Coherence	.28*	.31*	.21*	.15	-.01	.04	.28*	-		
9. RE Structure	.15	.22*	.12	.01	.07	.04	.25*	.64**	-	
10. RE Documentation	.17	.26*	.13	.30*	.21*	.20*	.20*	.52**	.44*	-

*p<.05. ** p<.001

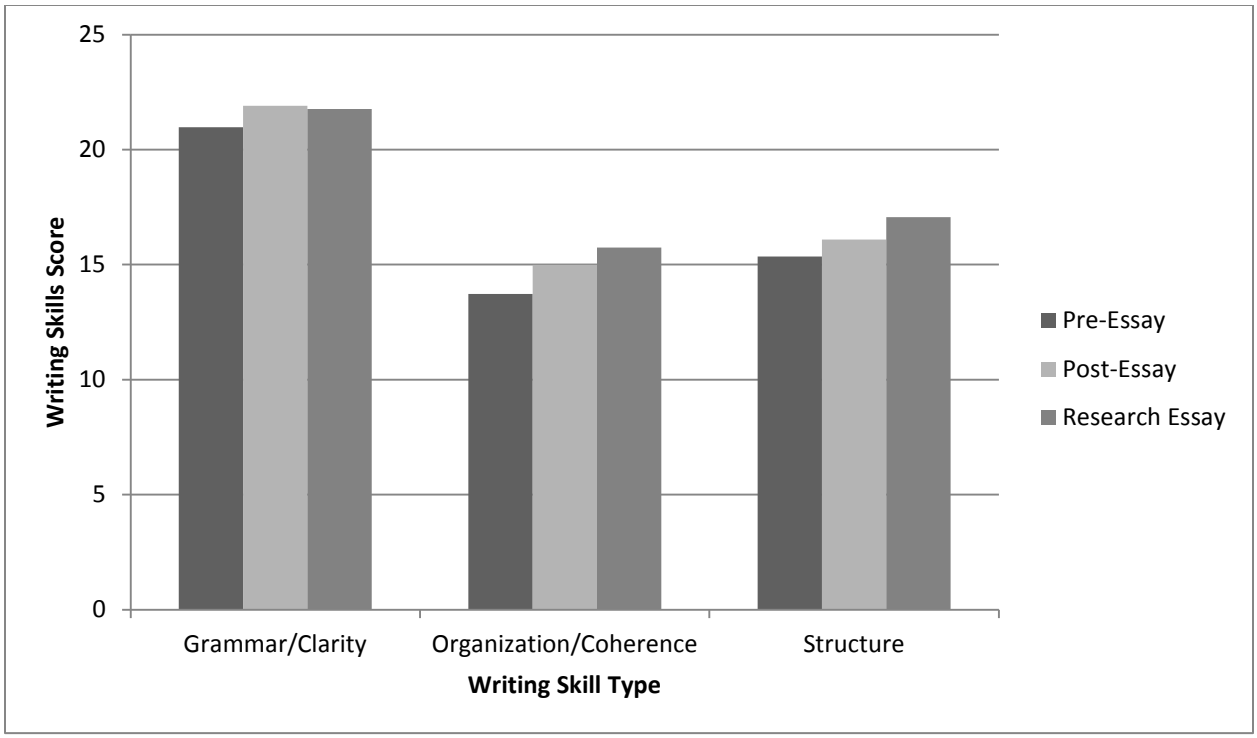

Figure 1. Bar graph of mean student essay writing scores for the three student essays. A 'ceiling effect' was detected for grammar/clarity scores from pre-essay to research essay. The organizational/coherence scores increased from pre-essay to research essay. Though structure scores appear to increase from pre-essay to post-essay, the results were not significant.