

UT MARTIN ASSESSMENT NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022

Our most important job is to help our students succeed!

2021-22 ETS Proficiency Profile Results

What would you think if you learned that our students' mean score on a national exam ranked at the 85th percentile? Or that our students' mean sub-scores ranked nationally at the 87th percentile for critical thinking, the 81st percentile for reading, the 78th percentile for writing, and the 77th percentile for math? It sounds like we are doing a fairly nice job with our students in these areas, doesn't it?

These are the results from the latest ETS Proficiency Profile (see the tables at the end of this Newsletter). Let's dig a little deeper. The ETS Proficiency Profile sub-divides each of the areas reading, writing, and math into three levels. Level 1 in each area is essentially the "basic" level: for reading, proficiency at level 1 means that the student can recognize factual material explicitly presented in a reading passage and can understand the meaning of words within the context of a passage; for writing, it means that the student can recognize incorrect word choices, order sentences in a paragraph, order elements in an outline, and recognize agreement among basic grammatical elements; for math, it means that the student can solve word problems using arithmetic, can solve problems involving informal properties of numbers and operations, understands square roots and squares of numbers, and can find information from a graph. These are skills that, ideally, our students should be coming to us already possessing. Levels 2 and 3 are progressively more complex than level 1. You can read more about the levels here:

https://www.ets.org/proficiencyprofile/scores/proficiency_classifications/levels.

Within each level, we receive information regarding the percentage of our students who are proficient at that level, who are marginal at that level, and who are not proficient at that level (these numbers are reported in the first table). You can see that, over the past three years, our numbers have changed very little in any of these areas (and these numbers are very similar to results from even further back).

Many of our programs have student learning outcomes addressing communication skills (usually

some variation on "our students will be able to communicate, especially about topics in their major, in both oral and written form") and critical thinking skills ("our students will be able to solve complex problems in their major" or a similar wording). In our program assessments, our students often rise to the challenge and our programs report meeting expectations in these areas.

But there seems to be a disconnect between what we are reporting in our program assessments and what we are seeing in the ETS Proficiency Profile results. The usual arguments may arise—students don't take the exam seriously because there are no consequences for failing to perform well on the exam; some of our students are coming to us underprepared for college; the questions on a nationally normed exam are different than what our students are "trained" to do; etc.—but do these arguments account for one fourth of our students failing to achieve proficiency at level 1 in reading and writing and almost half of our students failing to achieve proficiency at level 1 in math? Levels 2 and 3 are even more disheartening.

The sole responsibility doesn't belong to the English, Reading, and Math faculty, either. Almost every program on campus has a student learning outcome that addresses communication and one that addresses critical thinking. Many of our non-academic units interact with students in ways that involve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. That means we are all responsible for ensuring that our students are successful in these areas.

As you prepare for the fall semester, ask yourself what you are doing to strengthen these skills in your students and what you might do differently. For those students who are coming in underprepared, what support can you provide to help them meet your expectations?

We can meet students where they are academically when they come to us, but we are obligated to help them rise to meet our high expectations. And they can succeed in doing so given the chance. What can you do to help?

Summary of UT Martin ETS Proficiency Profile results 2020-22

Test results for seniors (more than 90 Semester hours), Master's Comprehensive Colleges and Universities I & II

	Proficiency Profile 2021-2022			Post-Comp 2020-2021			Post-Comp 2019-2020		
	1031			1066			662		
	% Proficient	% Marginal	% Not Proficient	% Proficient	% Marginal	% Not Proficient	% Proficient	% Marginal	% Not Proficient
Reading, Level 1	75	15	10	80	11	9	76	13	11
Reading, Level 2	47	19	34	52	20	28	47	18	35
Critical Thinking	4	32	64	5	36	59	7	29	65
Writing, Level 1	72	21	6	71	23	6	69	23	7
Writing, Level 2	23	41	35	24	41	36	22	40	38
Writing, Level 3	9	32	59	8	32	59	9	29	63
Math, Level 1	61	24	15	63	23	15	63	21	16
Math, Level 2	31	28	40	36	27	38	34	29	37
Math, Level 3	8	17	74	9	20	71	9	18	73

For comparison to national results:

2022 Comparative Data												
269,880 students at 265 colleges and universities												
	% Proficient		% Marginal		% Not Proficient				UTM's mean score	National mean scores	# institutions w/scores comparable	% scoring below UTM
	UTM	Nt'l	UTM	Nt'l	UTM	Nt'l						
Reading, Level 1	75	59	15	19	10	22		Total	449.36	439.5	7	85
Reading, Level 2	47	31	19	20	34	49		Critical Thinking	113.01	110.3	16	87
Critical Thinking	4	3	32	18	64	79		Reading	119.80	116.5	18	81
Writing, Level 1	72	55	21	29	6	16		Writing	115.51	113.2	32	78
Writing, Level 2	23	16	41	33	35	51		Math	114.03	112.5	29	77
Writing, Level 3	9	7	32	21	59	72						
								Context-based sub-scores				
Math, Level 1	61	50	24	26	15	24		Humanities	115.82	113.4	18	80
Math, Level 2	31	25	28	24	40	51		Social Sciences	114.49	112.0	29	82
Math, Level 3	8	6	17	14	74	80		Natural Sciences	116.84	114.2	26	79