Assessment of Writing Skills and Information Literacy Skills in Art 10000 was conducted June 1-June 16th, 2011 by the instructors Media Farzin (Art 10000), Casey Gordon (FIQWS) and Lise Kjaer (Art 10000). The assessment was coordinated by Ana Vasovic, (Coordinator for General Education), Lise Kjaer (Coordinator of Art 10000), and overseen by Joshua Wilner (Senior Faculty Advisor for Undergraduate Education).

Thirty-nine research papers from twenty-four different Art 10000 sections were collected randomly, and assessed using the General Education Writing and Information Literacy rubric system. While some rubrics worked well for the purpose, others pertaining to visual literacy and use of vocabulary were missing from the Gen Ed. rubrics and added later.

Discoveries and recommendations:

Overall, students' papers are satisfactory and well crafted in terms of organization, mechanics and style. With a caveat that the sample we are working with is very small, however, we noticed the following: Slight, gradual improvement in the writing scores from 1st year (2.19) to 2nd year (2.23) to 3rd/4th year (2.27) students. Second semester freshmen scores (2.25) are higher than first semester freshmen scores (2.06), while students graduating/2nd degree students score the highest (2.89).

A summary of the findings and suggestions follows below:

**Visual Literacy:** Students did very well in their analysis of one or two works of art. They analyzed and described the works in depths and applied vocabulary words when necessary. While most students did not center their papers on sophisticated logical arguments and discussions of literary sources, a critical thinking component of the essay was most certainly present. Upon reading students' visual analysis, it became evident that the students have been encouraged to combine the information and terms learned throughout the semester with their own, unique perspectives.

**Thesis:** While most students identified a controlling idea, few dared to make a significant inductive leap. Instead, many papers took the form of informative and well-written reports in which students were successful, however, at remaining focused on the topic at hand. Many students had the beginnings of a great thesis embedded into their formal analysis and descriptions. An emphasis on how to develop a clear thesis statement is recommended and plausible exercises for instructors to use in the fall will be implemented.

**Structure and Organization:** The majority of papers were organized into a progressive chain of thoughts through introductions, visual analysis, and conclusions. Although not all introductions and conclusions were strong and compelling (often due to a lack of thesis statement) a progression of thought between paragraphs and within the paragraphs was mostly present and fairly clear.

**Sources and Evidence:** While all found evidence in the visual objects to support their ideas, the majority of students made references to a number of scholarly sources, while others only referenced a few. General guidelines for research, and a fixed number of required published sources for the final paper, are recommended.
Effective Evaluation of Sources: For the most part, students demonstrate a clear understanding and evaluation of finding and using published and reliable sources. Only few referenced websites, and if so, they are typically museum websites and other trust worthy online resources.

Uses Information Ethically: Instructors had clearly spent time in class and provided transparent guidelines for the students to use. The majority of students did a very conscientious job in citing sources correctly. They used footnotes and developed their bibliographies in the Chicago style and organized their papers in the appropriate format.

Recommendations:

The suggested actions for further improvement are as follows:

Additional Support for Instructors: As a way of tailoring the writing assignments in Art 10000 to work in tandem with the FIQWS instructors’ methods of assigning writing (low-stakes and graded), Graduate Writing Fellow Katie Hanson and the Coordinator of Art 10000 Lise Kjaer, have developed a handbook for instructors. The handbook includes suggestions and sample assignments for instructors that address problem areas such as how to develop a thesis statement, how to write an abstract, and how to compose and structure a final research paper. It provides the instructors with a scaffolding technique and guidelines for all steps involved.

Consider Sequence of Courses: While students often take Art 10000 during their first semester at CCNY, two research papers (one in FIQWS and one in Art 10000) may become a daunting task and a bit overwhelming for them. A sequenced course of study, where Art 10000 follows a FIQWS, might be something for the college to consider. Additional help with note taking, building study skills, and tutoring support might also be useful to build into the students first year studies at CCNY.

Suggestions for the Rubrics: The critical thinking and information literacy scores are not that straightforward, and no particular patterns were apparent (except that in both categories second semester freshmen score better that 1st semester). In addition to the small sample size, we note that both rubrics were difficult to score, as "reflections" on the Critical Thinking rubric was hard to gage and score while the information literacy rubric had N/A categories.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the common sentiment was that the papers showed excellent use of visual literacy and a good level of student writing and information literacy skills. The average rubric scores are shown below.

| ART 10000 - Average Scores.– Writing / Critical thinking / Information Literacy / Artistic |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Thesis | Structure & Organization | Evidence & Development | Mechanics & Style | Reflections | Conclusions | Understand Info needs/search efficiently | Evaluate Info sources | Credibility of sources | Use info ethically | Artistic |
| 2.04 | 2.48 | 2.17 | 2.56 | 1.15 | 2.21 | N/A | 1.89 | N/A | 2.16 | √ |

Please note: The use of a scale 1-4 reflects a range from a beginning level to an accomplished level. It is meant as a “college span” scale, and it is expected that the majority of freshmen would not be in the “accomplished” end of the scale.