# Assessment of PSYS300 Writing in the Psychological Sciences

This course is, in my experience, one of the hardest, most annoying, yet most satisfying classes to teach. Inherent in teaching students to write like a scientist is to teach them how to think like a scientist. Both steps are very hard, yet very worthwhile. What is so satisfying about this class is the improvement in the writing skills seen in the students at the end of the semester, compared to the start.

Using the approved assessment rubric (appendix A), we see that students in Spring 2023 are performing well in their final versions of writing assignments (see appendix B). When these are entered into the scoring rubric, this year saw assessment at its highest point thus far – 86.6%. Similarly, if the total proportion of assignments in the "Good" or "Excellent" range, again a high score is seen – 85.2%.

The trends over four years can be seen in overall assessment:
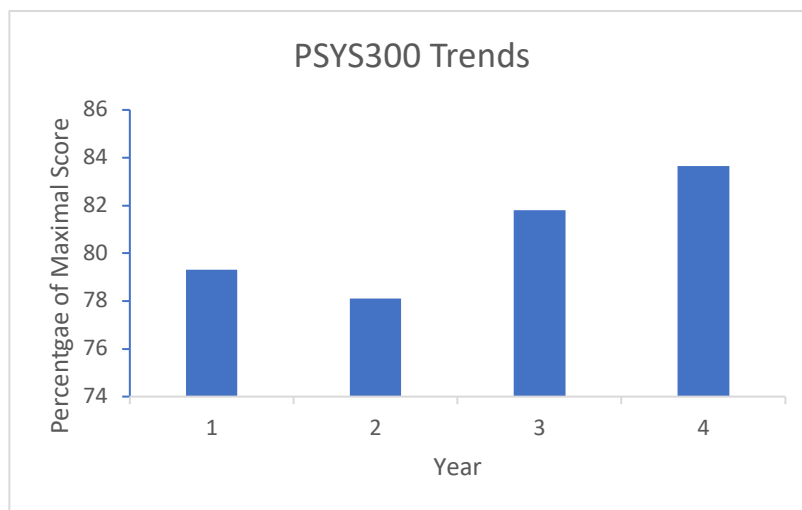
And also in terms of the proportion of scores that landed in the good and excellent range:
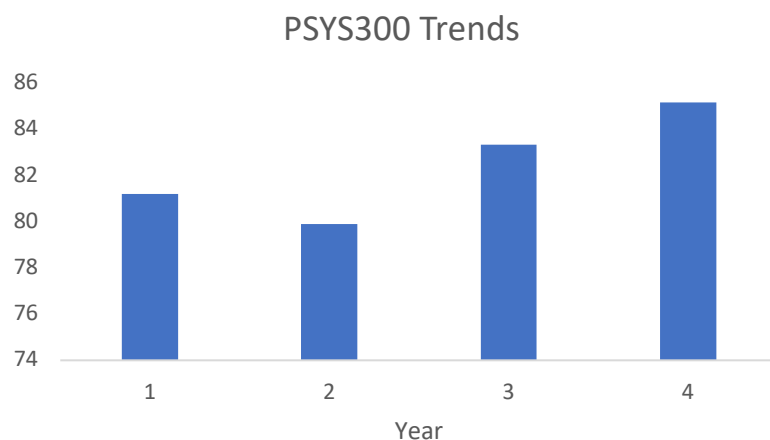
It should be noted that the format of the class was changed twice over this time period. In year 1 (2020), the class was all face-to-face lectures, in year 2 (2021), the class was all online. The format that I have settled on that seems ideal is hybrid (years 3 and 4).

The assessment data show that the class is effective in teaching tough-to-learn skills, but that more improvement can be made. Because so much criticism of the work of students has to be done, in 2023 I started adopting a good cop (the TA) versus bad cop (me) approach. I suspect that this will improved the assessment in 2023, and will continue to do so as we move forward.

Appendix 1: Approved Assessment Rubric					
Section	Subsection	Poor (1)	Satisfactory (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
Main sections of paper	Introduction	Some concepts not explained, and/or some failure to outline the question(s) addressed	Basic concepts and ideas introduced. The scientific question(s) has been adequately stated.	All sections are within the range of quality for an article **submitted** to a scientific journal. Some revision would be needed to be accepted for publication.	All sections are of a quality appropriate for publication in a scientific journal
	Materials & Methods	Not enough detail / clarity to allow experiments to be replicated	Enough detail provided that experiments could be replicated by a reader.		
	Results	Some results impossible to fully understand	A complete presentation of results with comprehensible figures and tables.		
	Discussion	Not all results discussed, or poor connection to other studies.	All results adequately discussed; reasonable connection to some other studies made.		
Short and Informal Format	Abstract	Some crucial aspects of the study not covered.	Appropriate for submitting to a student research conference.	Would be an appropriate abstract for submitting for a presentation at a meeting.	Appropriate for publication as the abstract of a journal article, or a presentation at a refereed
	Poster	Poorly constructed, and very hard to understand	Within the range of posters at a student research conference	Within the range of posters at scientific meetings.	Of a quality that would make it a noted poster at a scientific meeting.
	Powerpoint	Poorly constructed. Not adequate fr a student research conference.	Appropriate at a student research conference.	Equivalent to an average presentation of an established scientist at a scientific meeting;	Of a quality that would make it a noted presentation at a scientific meeting.
	Lay Article	Hard to read and understand. Misses key issues and/or uses excessive jargon.	Well written but some inclusion of technical terms beyond that expected in a lay article.	Very well written, and potentially publishable with some revision	Appropriate for publication in a format such as Psychology Today.

Appendix 2: Scores for 2023				
	Number of Students with scores (out of 16)			
Subsection	Poor (1)	Satisfactory (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
Introduction	2	2	4	8
Materials & Methods	1	2	9	7
Results	2	4	8	6
Discussion	2	3	4	7
Abstract	1	0	1	14
Poster	0	2	2	12
Powerpoint	2	1	2	11
Lay Article	1	1	4	10