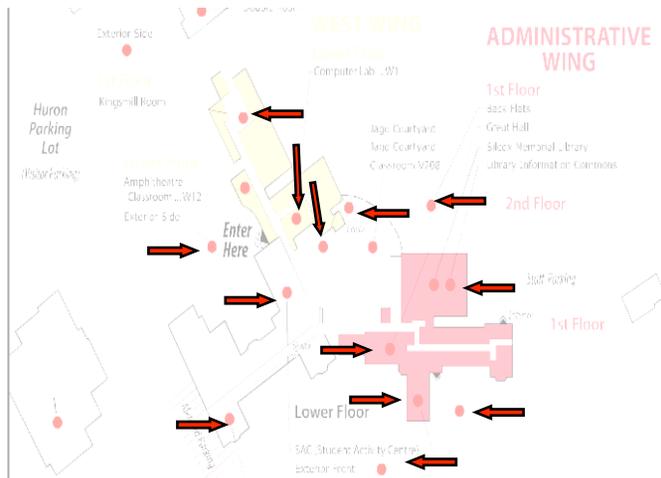


Huron University College/ UWO Writing Project: Writing through the curriculum



Roger Graves, UWO
Theresa Hyland, HUC
Boba Samuels, UWO



WAC/WID at Western

- UWO created Writing 101a (Writing 101F/G and Writing 101b (now 202F/G) in 1978.
- In the early 1980s, UWO instituted the essay requirement in a further effort to improve the writing of undergraduate students.
- 2006 OCAV guidelines adopted by SCAPA at UWO call for writing instruction in all degree programs



Missing data

- Key genre of writing in the disciplines is the writing assignment
- Conveys the purpose, audience, intellectual goals of the course
- No data exists that catalogues assignments across disciplines at Canadian universities



Exigency & Pilot Study

- The Writing Program offers Writing 121: Writing for MIT [MIT = media, information, and technoculture], 2nd year course
- Meetings with administrators led to questions about how the course articulates with first year and upper division MIT courses



Results

- We needed to fine tune our coding sheet
- Faculty members would not participate in a voluntary study (3 of 31)
- We turned this into an administrative initiative using public documents (syllabi)



MIT 431F

Class Meets On Thursdays from 2:30 to 5:30

The Art of Commentary: Editorial Cartooning and the Role of Dissidence in the Press

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- 1) Work within an honours level, in a scholarly environment within the discipline of advanced media studies.
- 2) Carry out original scholarly work in the same discipline. (Goal 3)
- 3) Perform competently in diverse areas, having developed familiarity with both historical and contemporary news editorial policies, their applications and their social and political impacts. (Objective 2)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Editorial commentary began to take shape as once authoritarian regimes began to relax controls on the contents of the daily press in the late 18th century. In Great Britain and the United States, the ability to speak out against government policy coincided with the extension of the franchise and land mark judicial decisions such as the 1745 Zenger Case. However until the mid point of the 19th century, social disobedience which included editorial commentary, was still a risky business. The first expression of editorial dissent in newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic came in visual form. The political cartoon as the vehicle for editorial commentary reached the peak of its success in Canada with the downfall of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald in 1873, in Great Britain with the founding of Punch in 1844 and in the United States in the attack on Boss Tweed in the late 1860's. This course will focus on the role of political cartooning primary in Canada and the United States but in other jurisdictions as well, as a vehicle for editorial commentary by examining the major political events since the mid point of the 19th century and the role of political cartoons as the voice of commentary.

Phase 2: Liberal Arts

We gathered 185 syllabi from across the curriculum:

- English (24)
- **Philosophy** (19)
- Economics (20)
- International and comparative studies (18)
- **History** (14)
- Psychology (13)
- French (13)
- **Political Science** (11)
- Chinese (11)
- Business (7)
- Religious studies (4)
- Japanese (4)
- Hebrew (2)
- Math (2)
- Sociology (1)

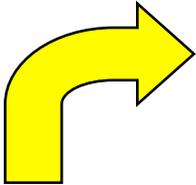


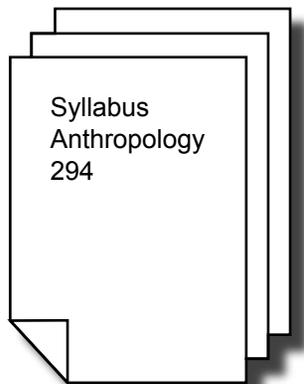
Objectives of our study

- ✓ To list and describe the range of writing assignments that students are required to produce in a given discipline.
- ✓ To determine how the assignments for upper years differ from the assignments for the lower years.
- ✓ To determine:
 - ✓ faculty expectations of the writing skills of the students in each undergraduate year
 - ✓ the manner in which these expectations are revealed to the students.
- ✓ To determine the implications of these findings for teaching.



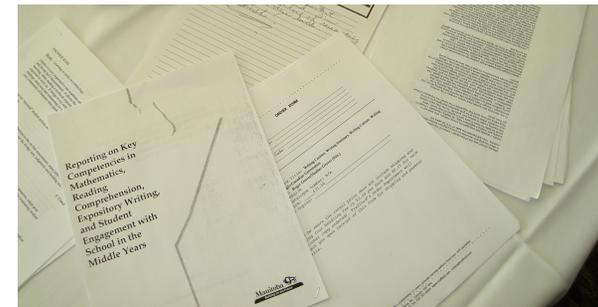
Methods: Assignments

- We gathered copies of course outlines and assignments that are given to students.
 - All assignments and documents were coded by the researchers--see handout.
- 
- course year level
 - genre
 - word length
 - value (percentage of final grade)
 - source documentation
 - provision of feedback
 - method of assessment (rubric, holistic, analytic)



Coding

- Coding scheme developed in pilot study
- Syllabi and assignments collected, copied, and numbered
- All assignments and documents were coded by the researchers
- Data sheets will be entered into Excel and SPSS



Results:

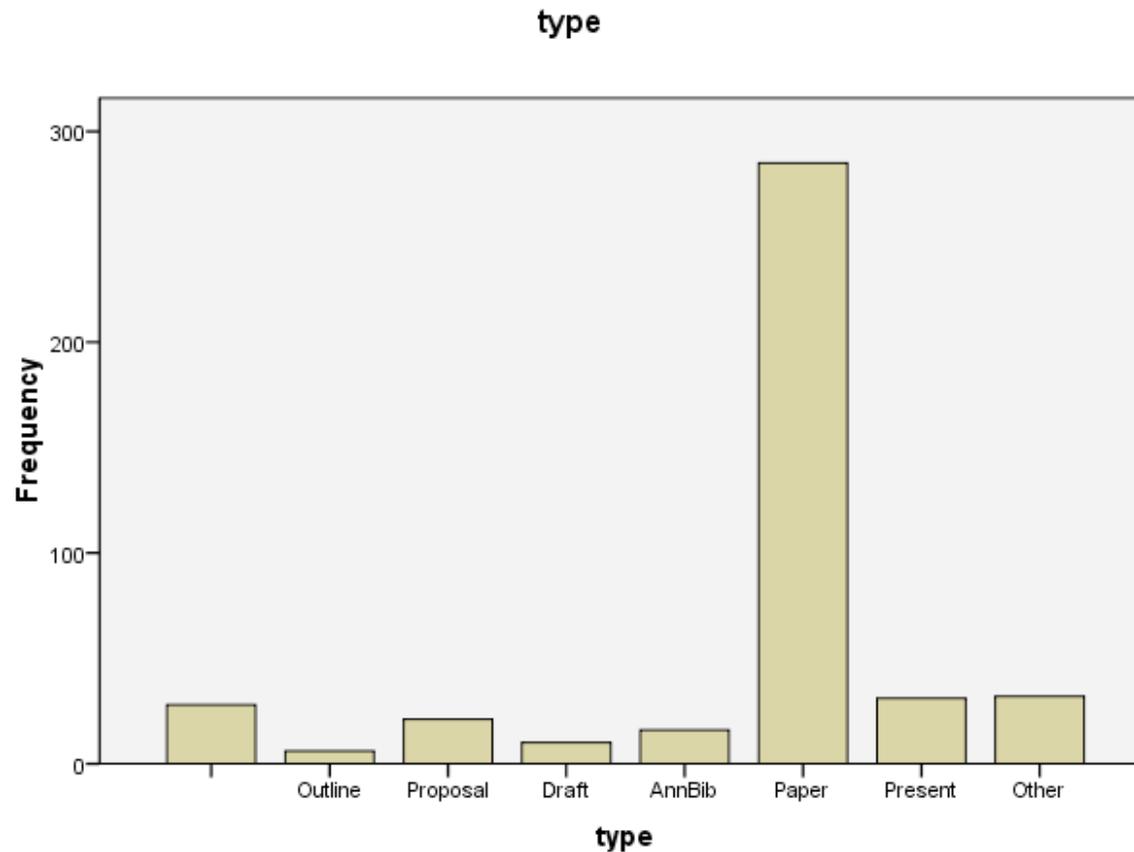
Describe the types of writing:

- 178 course syllabi yielded 447 assignments (5 courses removed)

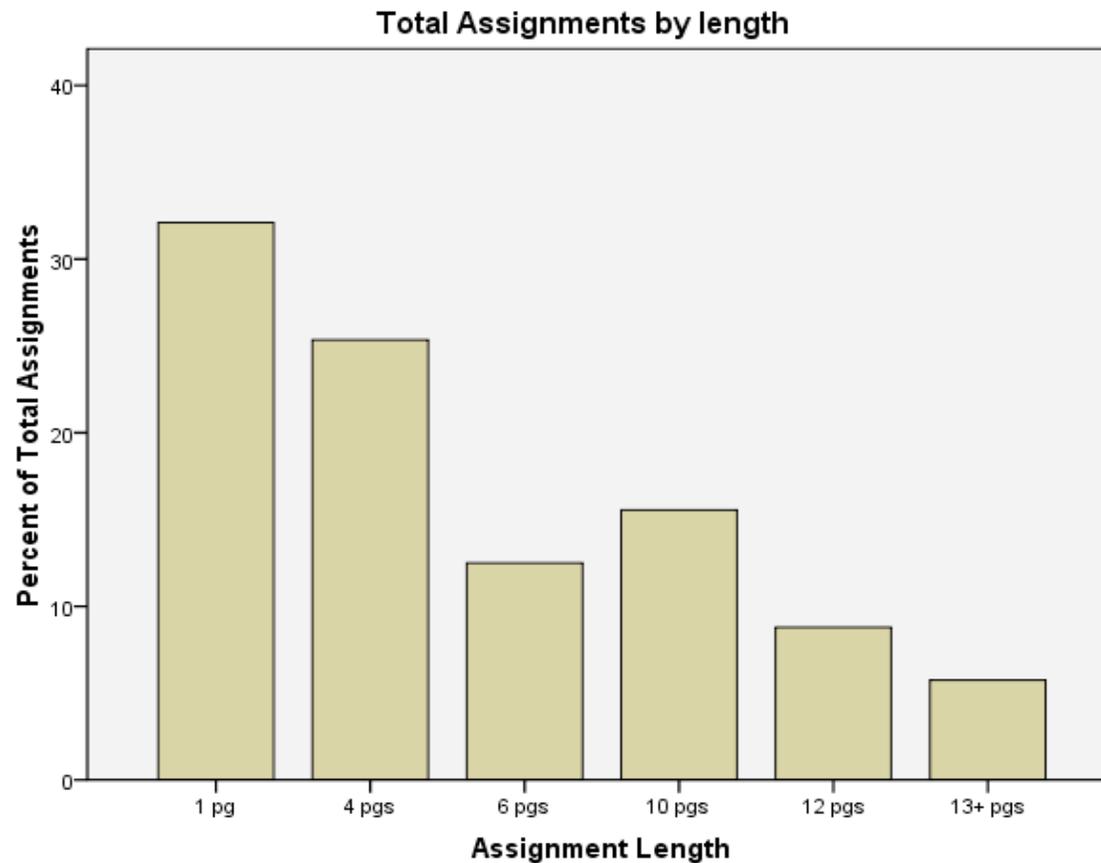
Level	# Courses	Assignments
Yr 1	28 (16%)	17%
Level 100	23 (13%)	9%
Yr 2	61 (34%)	34%
Yr 3	47 (26%)	28%
Yr 4	19 (11%)	12%



Types of assignments, n = 429

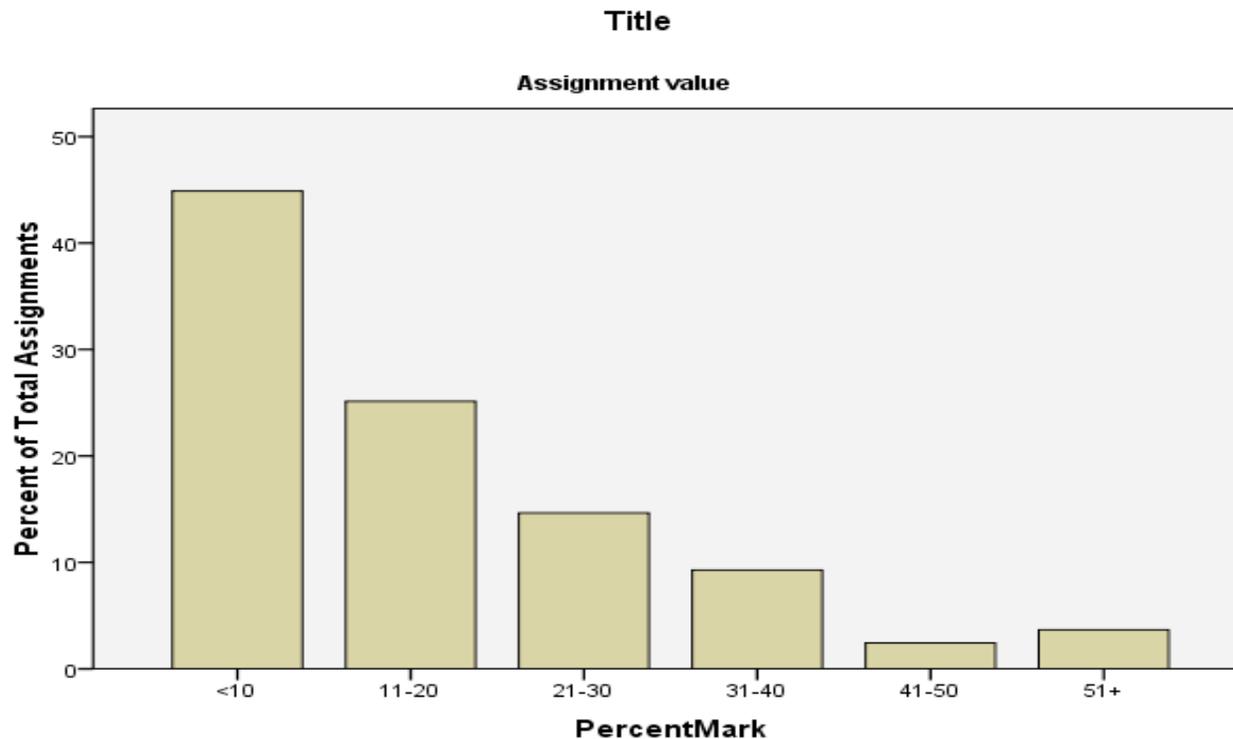


Number of assignments by length, $n = 297$ (66% of courses specified word count)

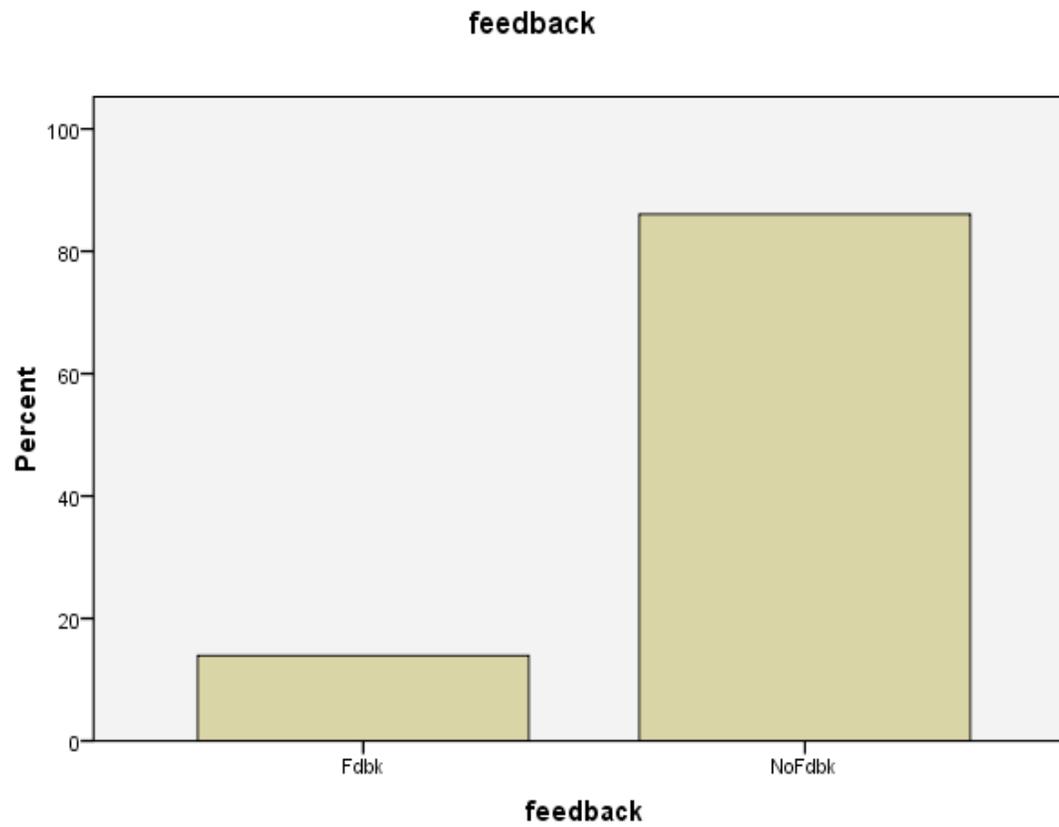


Total number of assignments by marks value,

n = 410 (91% of assignments allocated mark value)

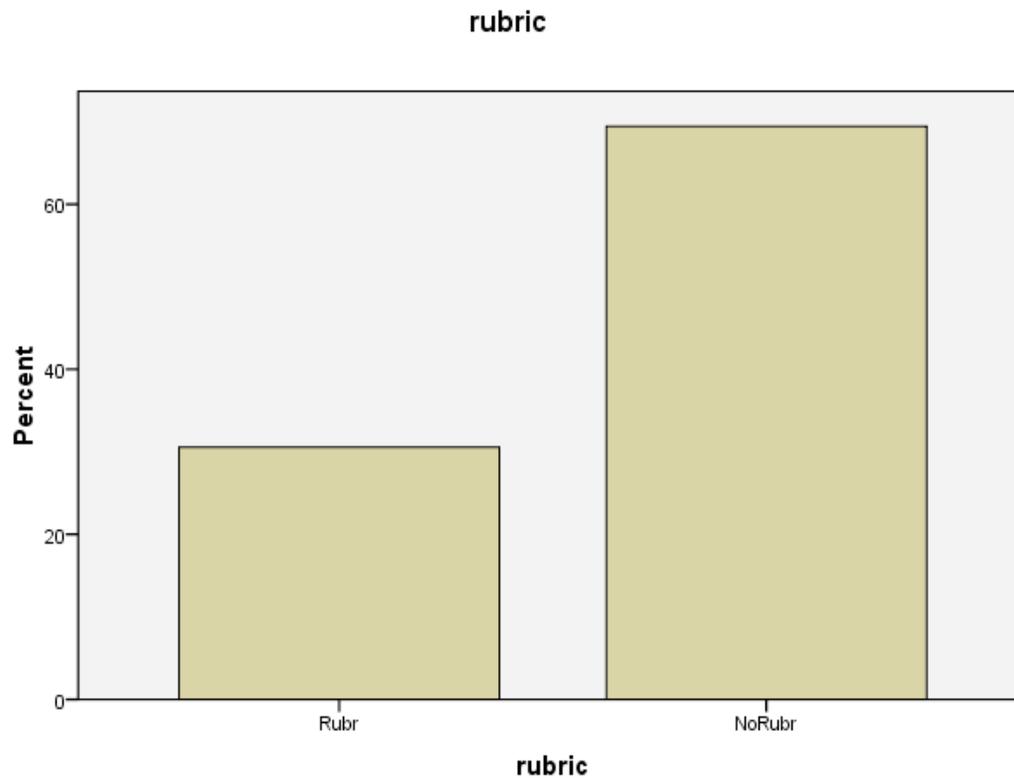


Feedback provided

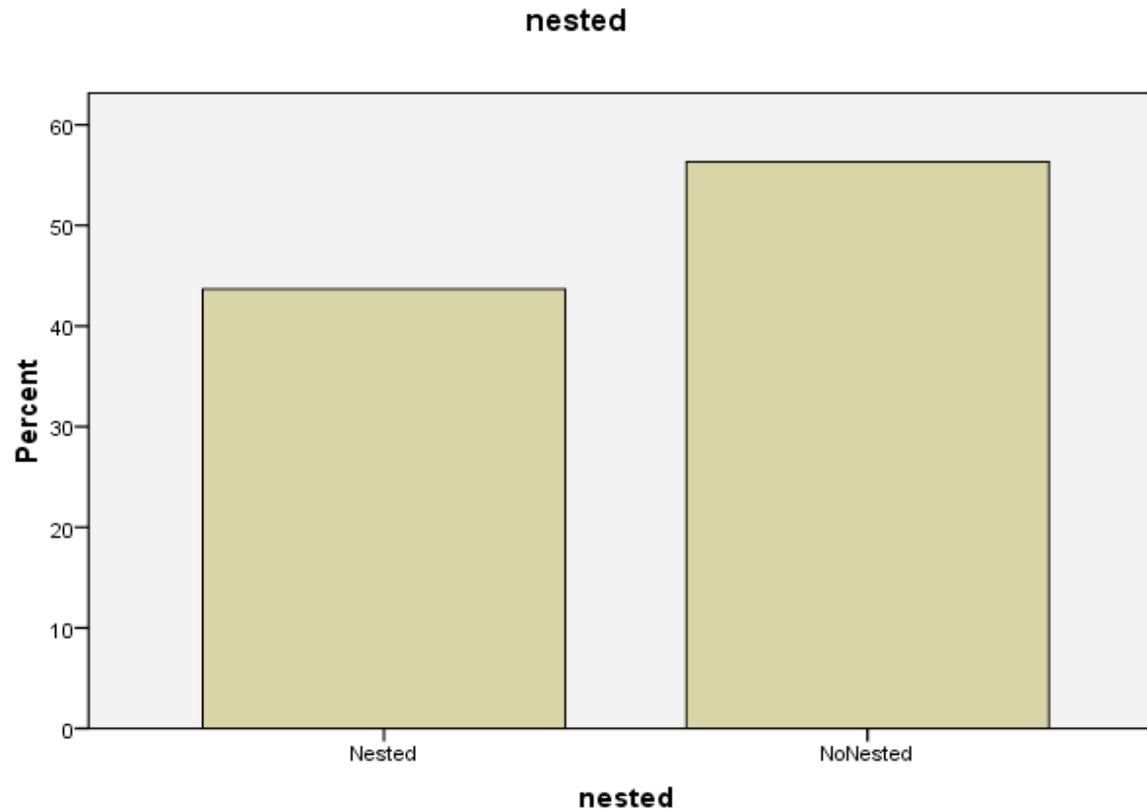


Marking rubric provided in syllabus,

n = 409 (10% missing)



On the brighter side...



Case Studies

Philosophy

Psychology

1. Representative departments from Humanities and Social Sciences
2. Use writing in genre specific ways
3. Both have a large number of courses and papers per course.



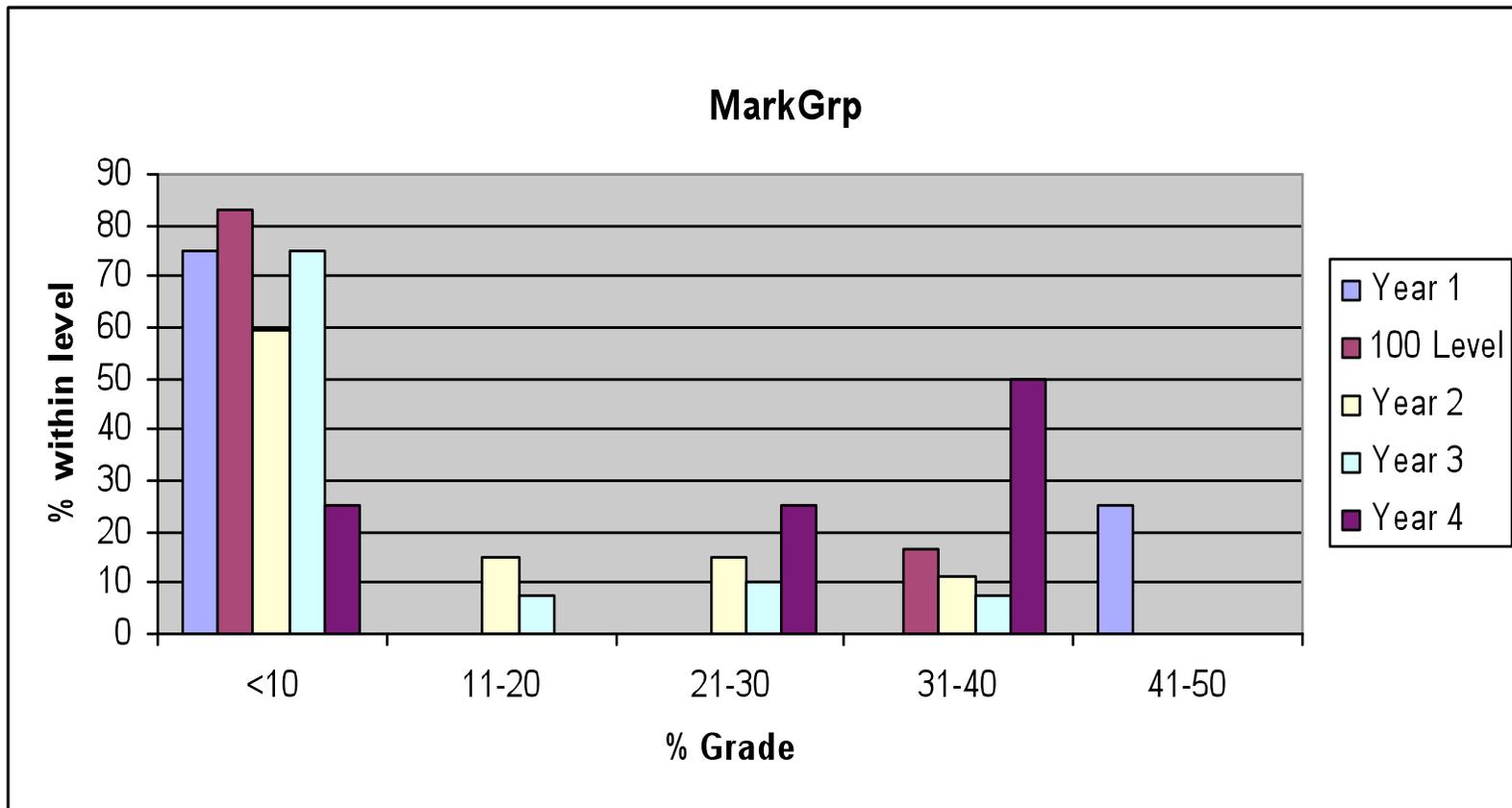
Philosophy:

N=25 courses; 91 written assignments

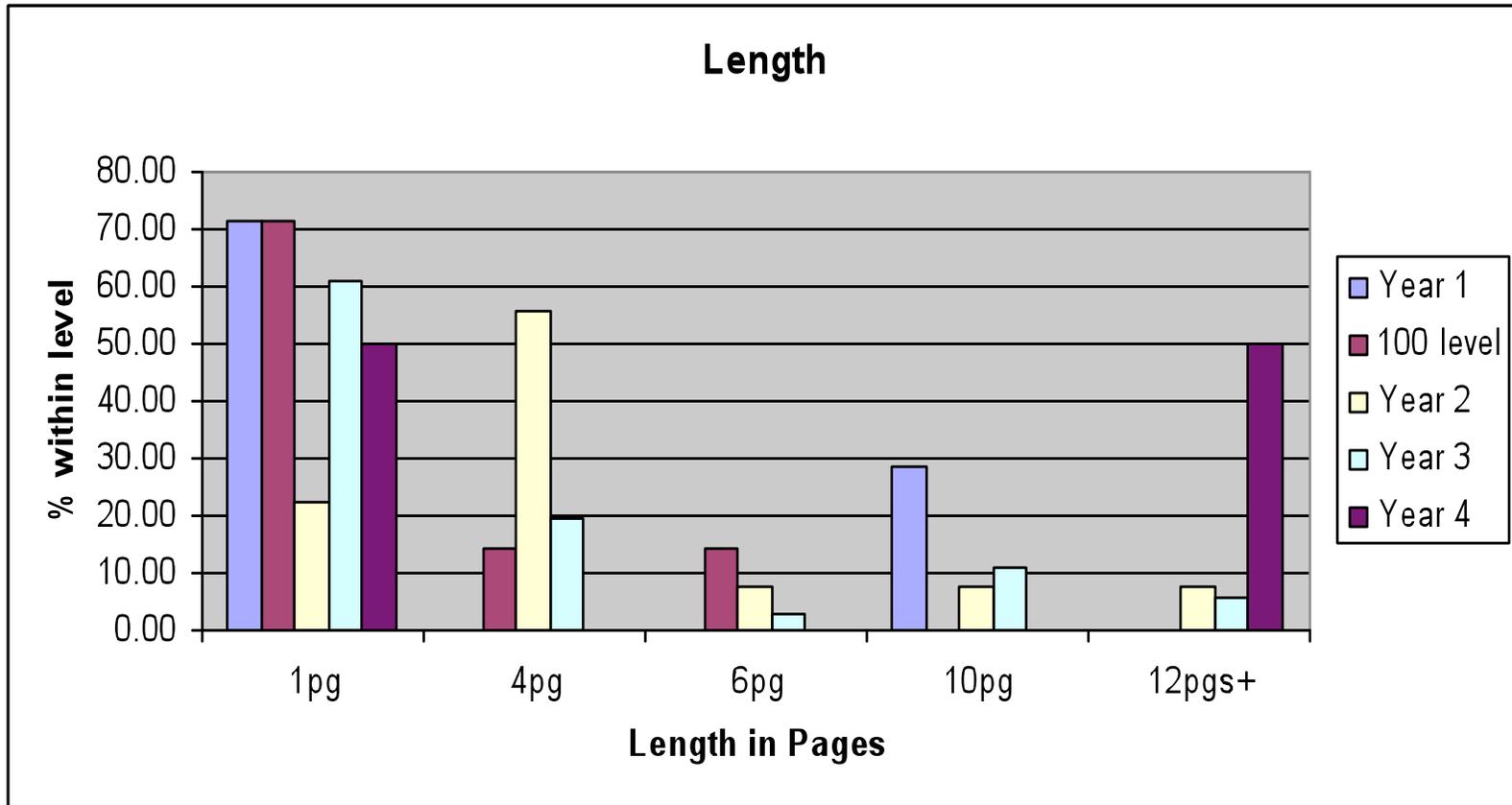
Level	Courses	Total Papers	Nested Assignments	Weight	Learning Goal	* Word Count	In-process Feedback	References	Style Sheet	Exemplar
0	3	8	5	30	4	1633	0	0	0	1
1	2	12	0	10	0	1075	0	0	0	0
2	8	27	16	29	18	1391	4	1	2	2
3	9	40	28	15	32	823	4	0	0	1
4	3	4	0	40	0	3000	1	0	1	0
Total	25	91	49		54		9	3	3	4



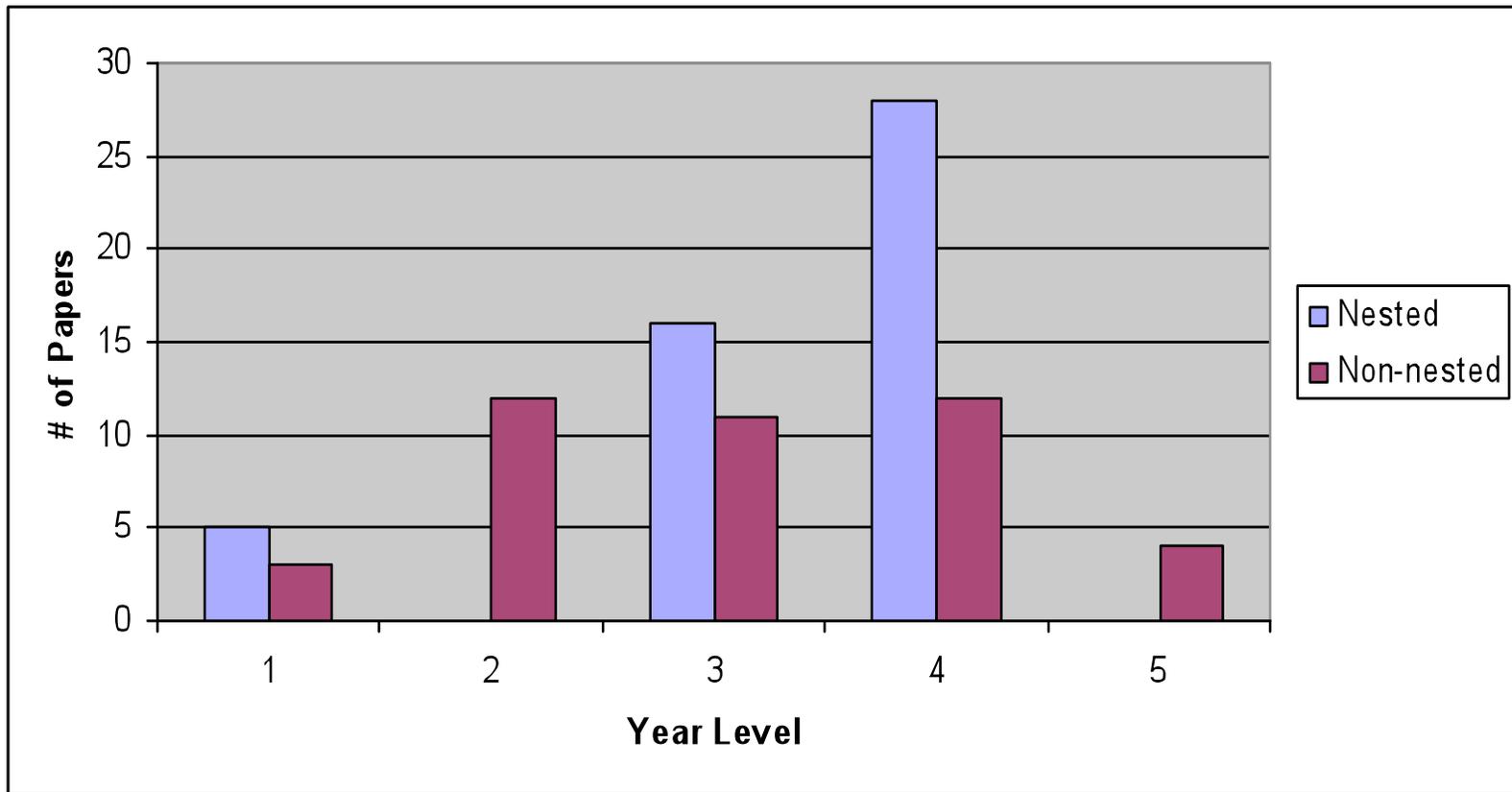
Mark Cross-tabulations



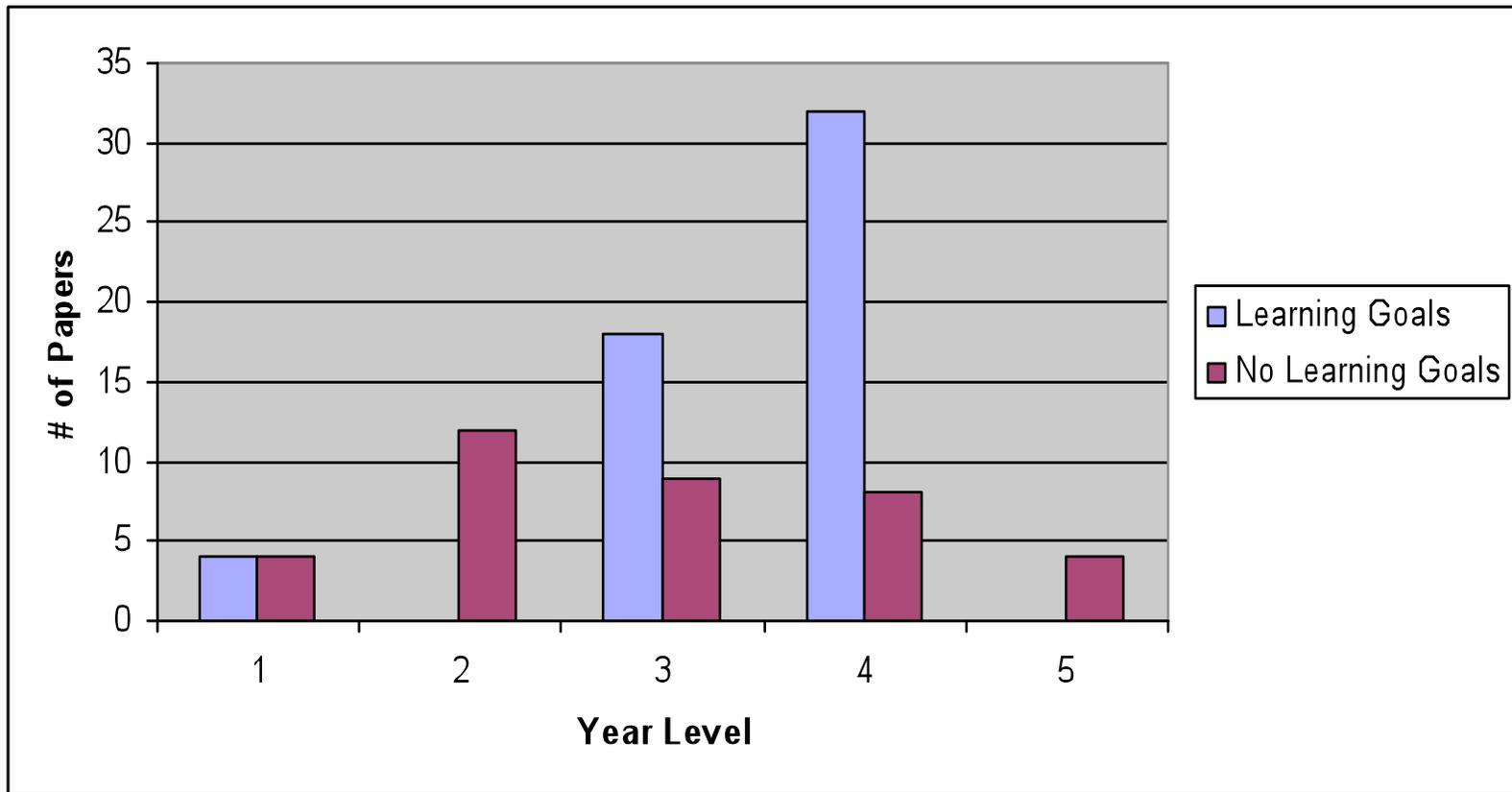
Essay Length Cross-tabulations



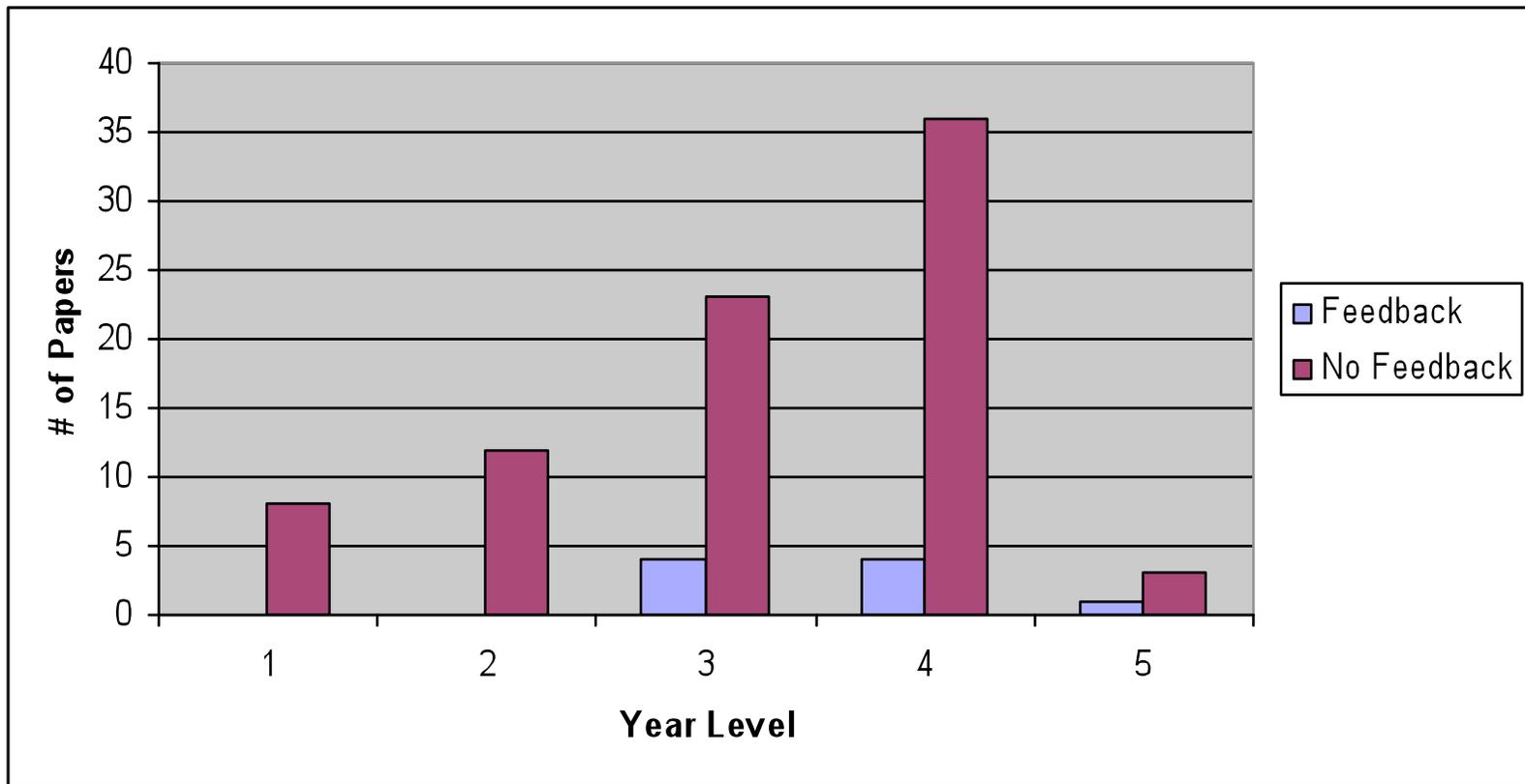
Nested Assignments



Learning Goals



In-process feedback



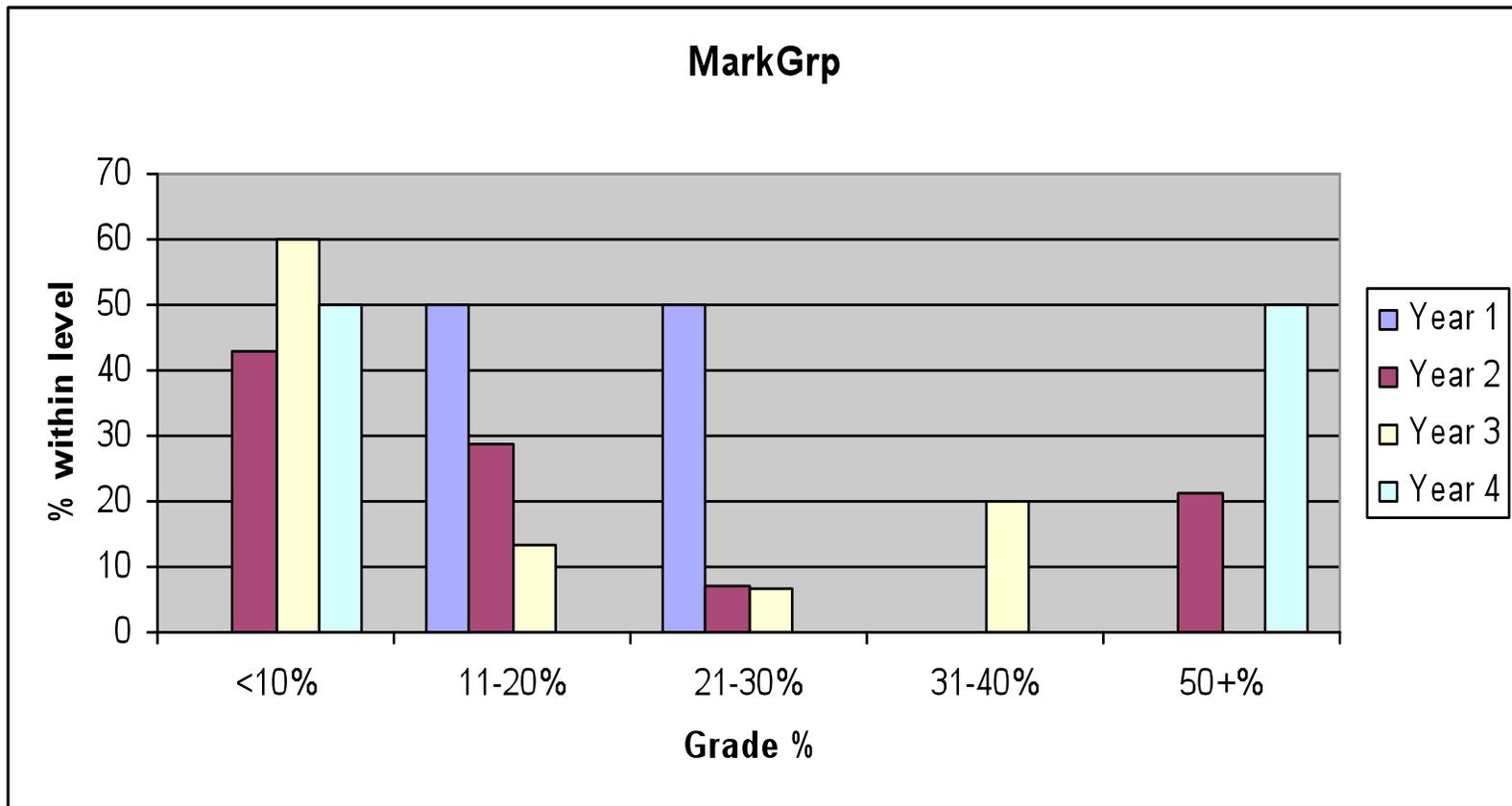
Psychology:

N= 11 courses/ 33 papers

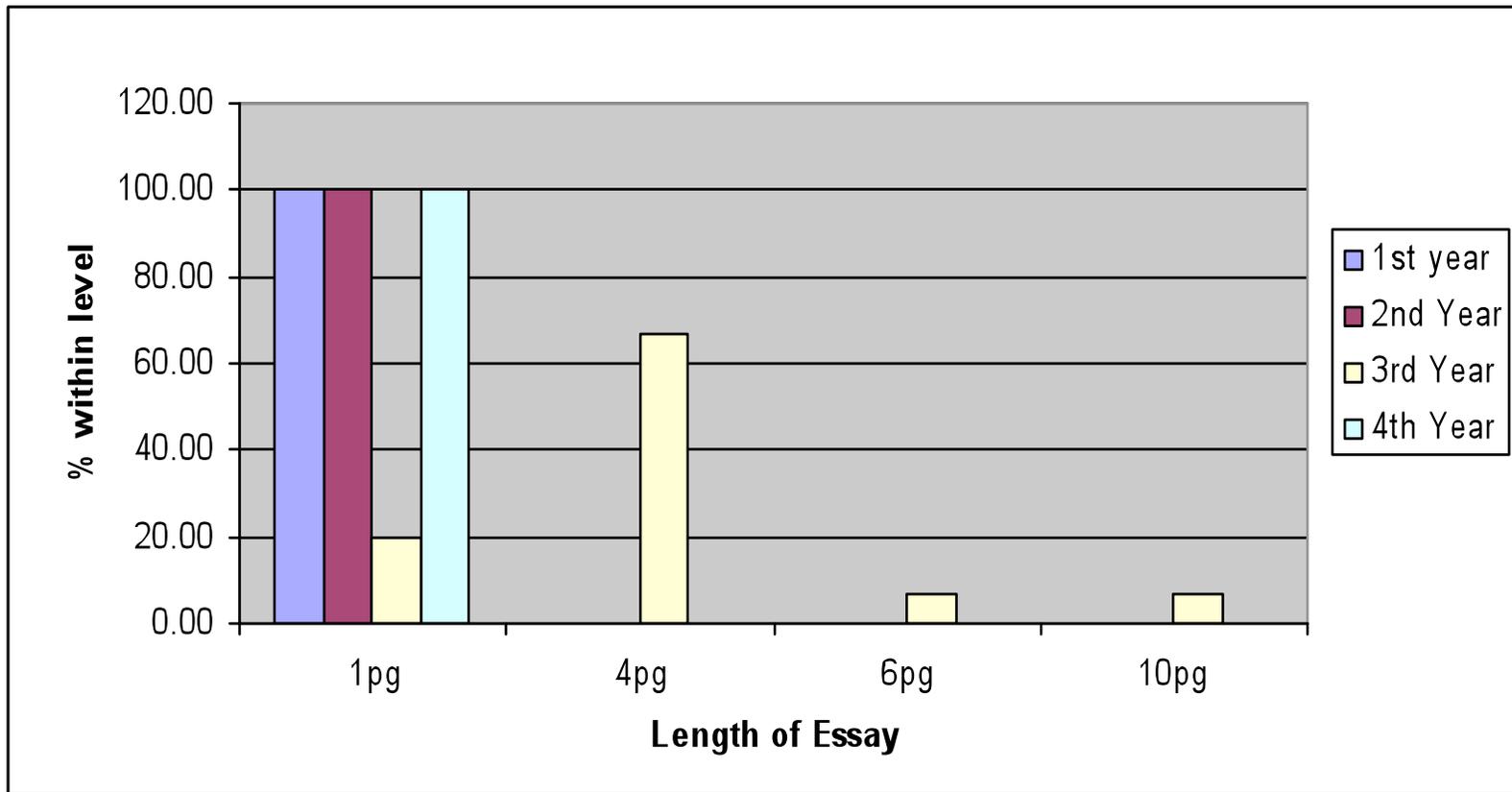
Level	Courses	Total Papers	Nested Ass.	*Weight	Learning Goal	Word Count	In-process Feedback	References	Style Sheet	Exemplar
0	1	2	0	20	0	na	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	6	14	6	16	3	na	1	4	9	4
3	3	15	11	26	4	1488	4	1	2	0
4	1	2	2	90	2	na	2	0	2	1
Total	11	33			9		7	5	13	5



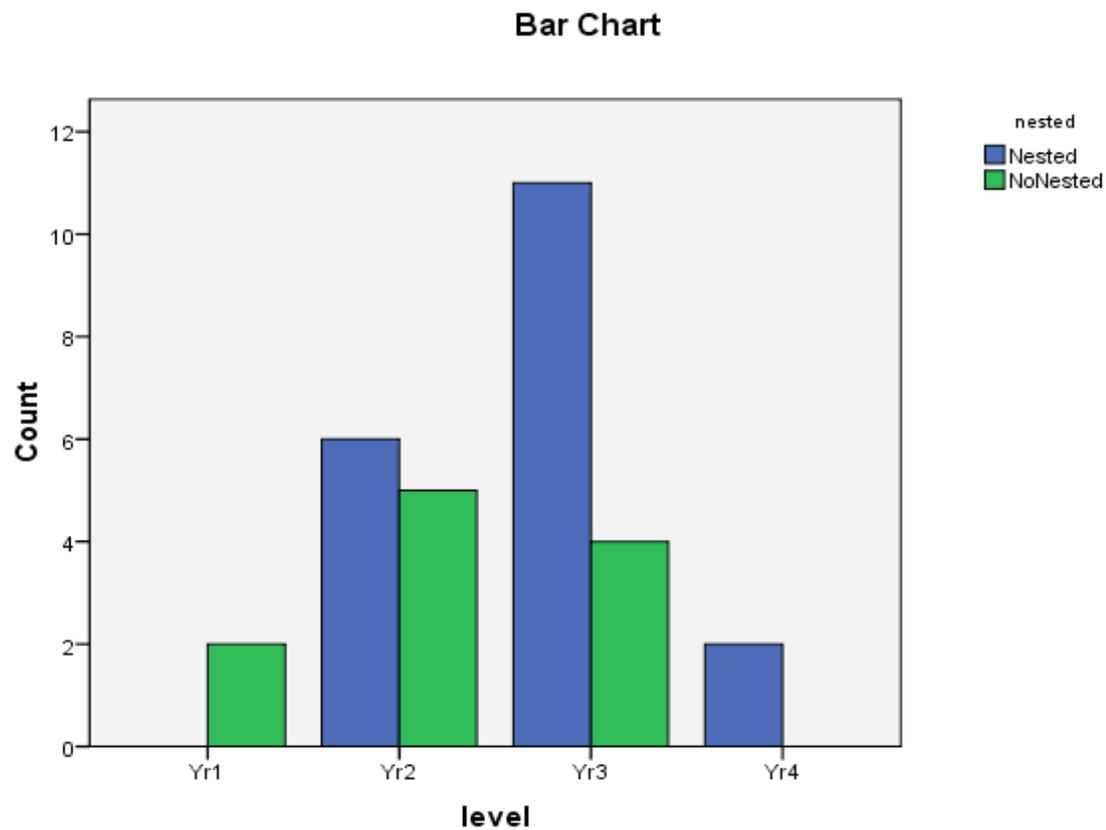
Mark Cross-tabulations



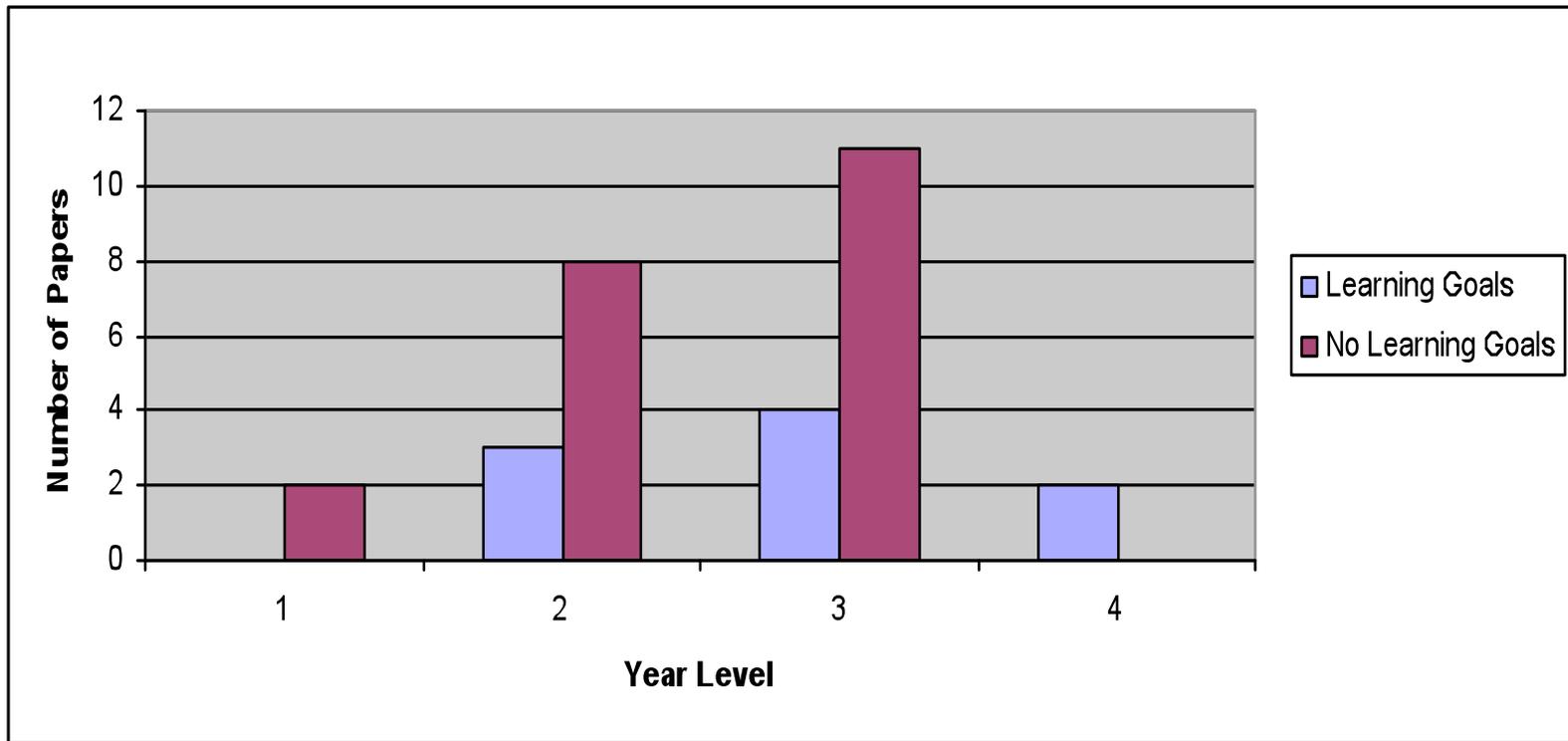
Essay Length Cross-tabulations



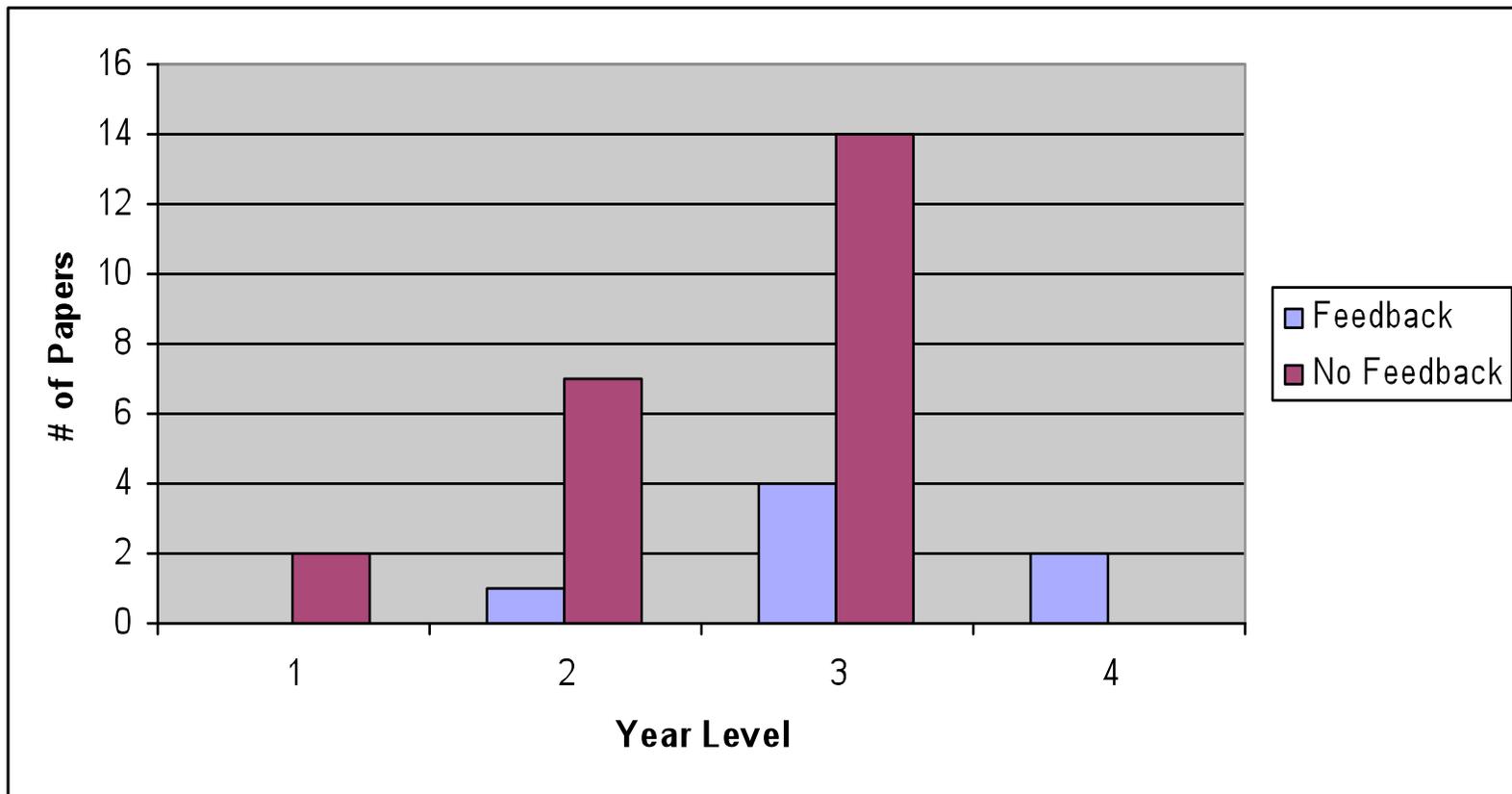
Nested Assignments



Learning Goals



In-process Feedback



Discussion/Implications

- ✓ To determine the implications of these findings for teaching.
- ✓ Assessment
- ✓ Literacy of graduates
- ✓ Funding



NSSE and Writing

- To what extent had your experience at Western contributed to: Writing Clearly and effectively?
- To what extent had your experience at Western contributed to: Speaking clearly and effectively?



Writing and Learning

- writing plays an indispensable role in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of inquiry and dissemination specific to various disciplines and professions

Georgia State WAC Program,

http://wac.gsu.edu/content/introduction/what_is_wac.shtml



Writing and Learning

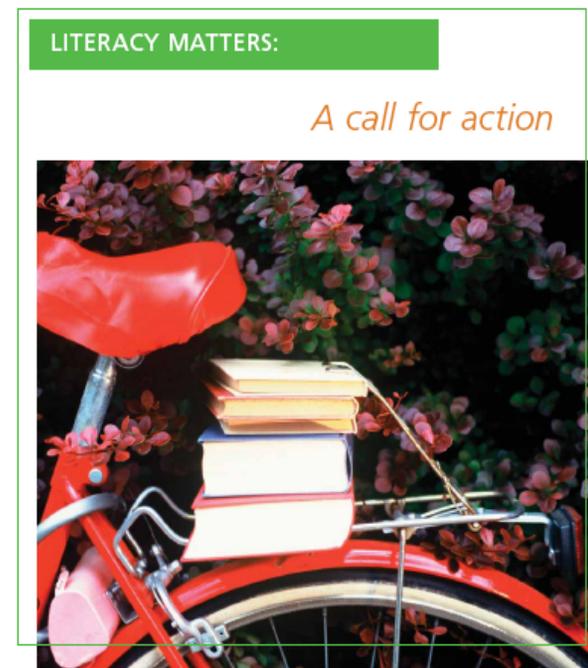
[S]tudent engagement with the subject matter being taught increases significantly when they are more frequently asked to write about that subject, particularly in courses in their junior and senior years.

Richard J. Light. "Writing and Students' Engagement " *Peer Review* 6.1 (Fall 2003): 28-31.



Literacy of university graduates

- 11-14% of university **graduates** have inadequate prose literacy



 **Bank Financial Group**



http://www.td.com/community/literacy_matters_report.jsp

Research Partnership

- Woodworth College at the University of Toronto is doing a similar study
- We have shared coding schemes
- These projects address [Ontario Council of University Vice-presidents \(OCAV\) assessment initiatives](#)
- We hope to obtain ongoing funding (SSHRC) to build the database of information on student assignments



Funding

We wish to thank the Teaching Support Centre, UWO for funding Phase Two of this research project.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Teaching Support Centre (TSC) at the University of Western Ontario. The header features the university's name and the TSC logo. A navigation menu includes links for Home, About TSC, Faculty Programs, Graduate Student Programs, Services, Awards & Grants, and Resources. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area is divided into sections for Graduate Students and Faculty. The Graduate Students section lists the Future Professor Series (Fall 2007) and the Academic & Professional Communication Series. The Faculty section lists the Research on Teaching Small Grants Program and the Teaching with Technology Workshop Series. A Quick Links section on the right provides access to Classroom AV Support, WebCT Videos & Manualettes, Service-Learning at Western, PressWestern, and Other Western Links. Below this is a Western Site License logo. The bottom section features a 'Reflections' newsletter announcement for the Fall 2007 issue, which includes a discussion with James Côté. A 'CALENDAR' link and 'Simple Steps Toward Quality' are also visible.

